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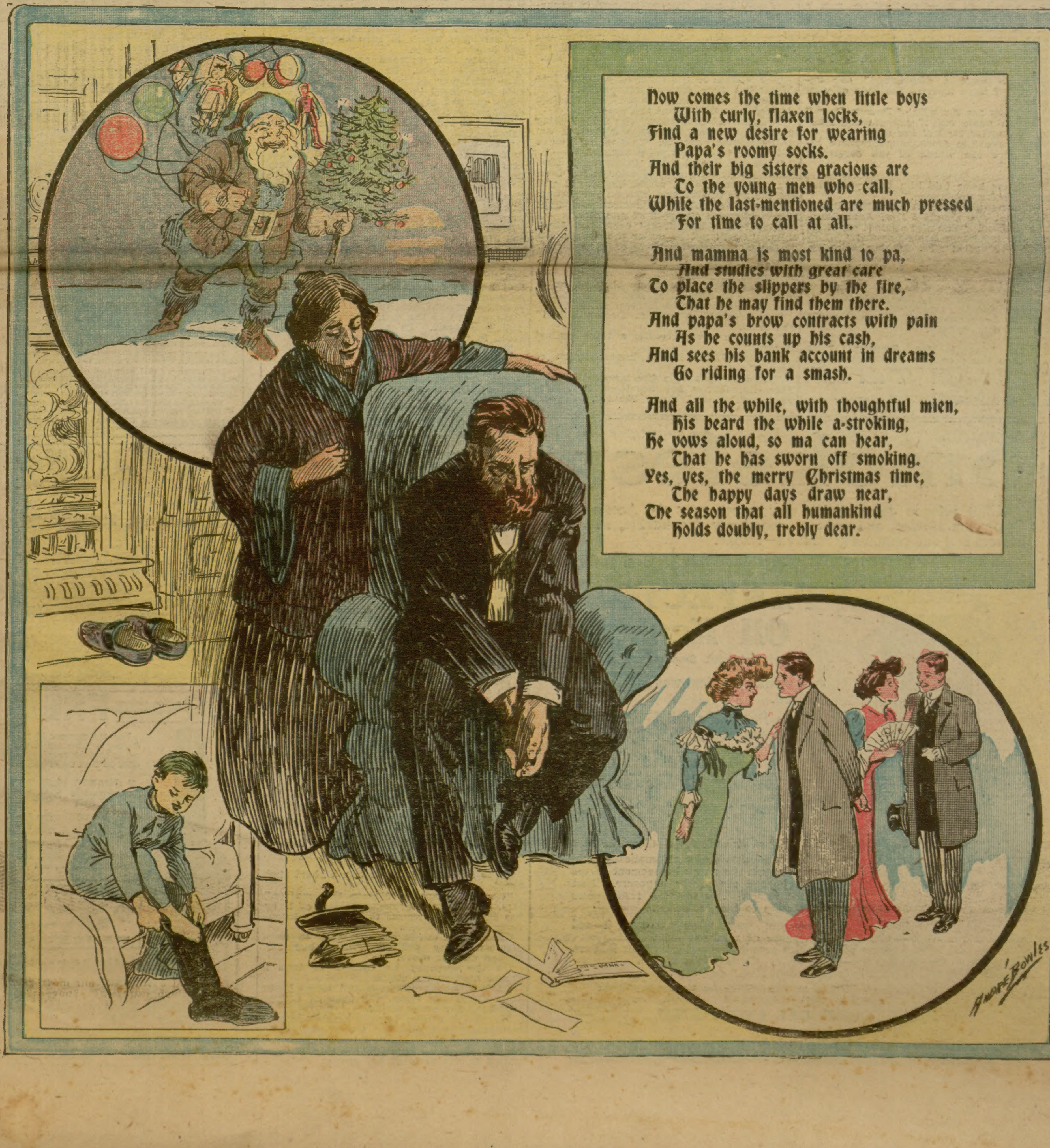
# As the Day Approaches



Now comes the time when little boys
  With curly, flaxen locks,
Find a new desire for wearing
  Papa's roomy socks.
And their big sisters gracious are
  To the young men who call,
While the last-mentioned are much pressed
  For time to call at all.

And mamma is most kind to pa,
  *And studies with great care*
To place the slippers by the fire,
  That he may find them there.
And papa's brow contracts with pain
  As he counts up his cash,
And sees his bank account in dreams
  Go riding for a smash.

And all the while, with thoughtful mien,
  His beard the while a-stroking,
He vows aloud, so ma can hear,
  That he has sworn off smoking.
Yes, yes, the merry Christmas time,
  The happy days draw near,
The season that all humankind
  Holds doubly, trebly dear.

# A Loveless Bridal;

## Or, *THE PLOT AGAINST MARCELLA*

### *By Captain Douglas Lyon*

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### CHAPTER XIV.

### AN UNSUMMONED CALLER.

"I TRUST, my dear, that you are now in a humor to listen to me," said Mrs. Leo Stanley to Marcella, whom she had summoned into her presence, not many hours after her interview with Ramon.

The unwilling bride, as beautiful as ever, but still pale, looked into the cunning face framed by a part of the arm-chair in the ample parlor in Lovelit place, and simply bowed her head.

"I shall now acquaint you with the status of your fortune," continued Mrs. Stanley. "It is needless for me to produce the will. I can state its contents without that trouble. You are an only child. Your father, Donald Steele, was one of the solid men of the city at the time of his death. By the will, which he left behind, you were given one million dollars, which sum was to be invested by a certain person named by your father in the document. The sum was invested, and, thanks to judicious management, the original sum has considerably increased.

"As you have been told, there was a clause in the will which placed you in my care. You were to obey me in every particular upon penalty of disinheritance and the recipiency of your father's curse."

Marcella here interrupted with a quick motion of her hand.

"Wherein have I disobeyed?" she exclaimed. "I have married the man of your selection."

"Yes. You are the wife of Ramon Doan."

"Wife in name only!" admonished Marcella, as some color left her face.

"You drove him from your presence almost before the words of the ceremony were cold."

"I did."

"You since have told him that you were living only for vengeance."

A defiant smile came to Marcella's lips.

"For what else should I live, Aunt Stanley?" she cried. "The plot against my happiness and my honor has succeeded."

"The plot?" cried Mrs. Stanley, feigning astonishment.

"The deepest and blackest plot ever formed against one of my sex."

"Then I understand that you will never acknowledge Ramon as your husband?"

"Never!" was the reply.

"Not if I command to the contrary?" asked the wily woman.

"Not even then."

"Beware!" cried Mrs. Stanley. "You stand upon the edge of a great pit. What says the will? If you disobey me you lose the legacy and gain your dead father's curse."

The figure of Marcella was suddenly shot to its full height. Her eyes got a more intense light and the woman in the chair seemed to quail before the look that transfixed her.

"I fear not the pit!" spoke Marcella with cutting calmness. "I am here to declare what I have declared before: That Ramon Doan shall never be acknowledged as the husband of Donald Steele's child."

"Then you've lost all," said Mrs. Stanley.

"So be it. And what is 'all' in your estimation? A few paltry dollars, for which men and women plot and lose their own souls. I spurn the legacy which is accompanied by the basest of commands. Show me the will! I have demanded this before, but you have withheld the paper. Let me see my father's signature. Let me read what he wrote, or caused to be written. Were there not two wills, Aunt Stanley?"

"Two wills, girl?"

"One genuine and one false?"

"What say you?" and the face of Mrs. Stanley turned ghastly white.

"Is the will which you have under lock and key signed by one Jasper Chipps?"

"It is so signed."

"Would you let the man see his signature?"

"Ah, you still talk of the man who came to your window at midnight, while you are the wife of another! You meet this villain Chipps and now come to me with a wild story which he has placed in your heart. Girl, you are not fit to be the wife of Ramon Doan."

"Better the slave of Jasper Chipps than the bride of the man whose name you have just spoken!" exclaimed Marcella.

"I see, I see. The conspiracy is apparent."

"But you have not shown me the will," cried Marcella. "You dare not produce the document from which you once read me the item which has embittered my life. Talk not to me of conspiracy."

The woman in the chair only looked into Marcella's face without answering.

Marcella gazed at her a moment and then walked proudly toward the door.

"You have my answer," she said, looking at Aunt Stanley. "Though a wife, I am still my own mistress. This night I leave this place. I am not yet a beggar. I——"

"You shall not go!" interrupted Mrs. Stanley without a sign of color in her face. "It will create talk, scandal, girl. It will set the seal of condemnation on your whole future. You will be ostracized and kept forever beyond the pale of gentility."

"But I would be free!" exclaimed Marcella. "I will not be under the domination of the plotters and a slave of the corrupt. More than this, my tea will not be in danger of receiving the mind blighting potion of Doctor Judas!"

At this Madam sprang to her feet, quivering like an aspen leaf, and faced Marcella with the mien of a tigress.

"No accusations against Doctor Judas!" she cried.

"Must we never breathe a word against Satan?"

"Doctor Judas is the impersonation of honor."

"Then Heaven help the innocent!" cried Marcella, laying her hand on the doorknob. "Farewell, Aunt Stanley. Beyond this house I may not be entirely friendless."

With this she sent a last look at the woman in the middle of the room and vanished. Mrs. Stanley heard her on the stair. In a moment the sound of her footsteps died away, but the woman below waited for her to reappear.

Twenty minutes passed and Marcella did not descend the steps.

"Can she have gone?" stammered the watcher in the hall, and with this she bounded up the stair.

A few flying steps carried her to Marcella's room. She flung wide the door and stared inside.

The room was empty!

"Gone!" cried Mrs. Stanley as she recoiled. "Gone to the rascal Chipps!"

She descended, and entering the parlor, struck the silver call-bell, and the face of the maid appeared.

"How did Marcella—Mrs. Doan, leave the house?" asked Mrs. Stanley.

"Madam——"

"You must have seen her depart," was the interruption, as the face of the speaker betokened a storm.

"I saw nothing, madam——"

"Where is Dularia, Marcella's maid?"

"She left at six."

"I see," cried Mrs. Stanley, "I see through the plot. Get your hat, Isis, and come back instantly."

The girl disappeared, and the woman, left alone, sank into the depths of her chair and for a moment looked like one dead.

Suddenly the door opened and Isis, dressed for the street, was framed within it.

Mrs. Stanley wrote hurriedly on a sheet of perfumed paper, which she enclosed in an envelope, which in turn she addressed and handed to Isis.

"Deliver that as soon as possible. Let nothing check you. Here, take a cab or a car—whichever is swiftest," and a gold coin was placed in the girl's hand.

Isis glanced at the superscription on the envelope, and then looked up at Madam.

"What if I don't find him at home?" she asked.

"You will—you must! Go, go!" and the half-frightened maid found a hand on her arm and she was pushed, stumbling into the hall.

"We are on the edge of an abyss!" cried Mrs. Stanley. "You must find the doctor. But if you should not—no, it cannot be that way. He will be at home."

Isis ran down the steps of the mansion, and almost collided with a man, who gave her a look and mounted the three steps himself.

He did not knock, but turned the knob and boldly enteerd. A glance around told that he was a stranger in that house, but he seemed to know the general make-up of premises of that description.

He walked to the door of the parlor and pulled it open. In another moment he stood in the presence of Leo Stanley.

The mistress of No. 99 Lovelit place, when she caught sight of her visitor, started visibly.

The man was well but not expensively dressed, and looked like a well-to-do mechanic.

"Mrs. Stanley, I believe?" he said, coming forward, hat in hand.

"What is it, sir? You've not been sent for——"

"No, madam, and that's just the reason I came," was the cool interruption. "I am Jasper Chipps, and I want to see the paper called the last will and testament of Donald Steele."

Mrs. Stanley did not stir. Her color went till she seemed a marble statue in the heart of the arm-chair.

### CHAPTER XV.

### CHIPPS TURNS THE TRICK.

If Jasper Chipps was a man whose personality would not attract the softer sex, and indeed it would not, he was a clear and cool-headed individual.

His voice was soft and almost musical, and when he told Mrs. Stanley that he had come to inspect the document called the last will and testament of Donald Steele he did not exhibit any excitement.

The woman in the chair looked at him with eyes that would read the inmost tablets of his heart, but all at once she leaned forward and said:

"I regret, sir, that I have no acquaintance with you. Therefore, it is not advisable that you inspect the document you have just referred to."

"You mean, madam, that you will not let me see the paper?"

"I trust I spoke with the necessary plainness."

"Very well."

Jasper Chipps coolly crossed his legs and looked Madam squarely in the face.

"The so-called will is in your possession?" said he.

"It may or may not be."

"It is in your hands, or was a short time ago."

"I must refuse to discuss this matter." Mrs. Stanley was growing bolder, as if by her display of firmness to defeat the intentions of this person.

The lady's words were enough to have dismissed any ordinary man, but Mr. Chipps did not move.

On the contrary he seemed to take a firmer hold on the chair.

At last the woman rose and took a hasty turn about the room, the eyes of Chipps following her every stride.

He saw her take from a marble mantel something that glittered for a moment in her grasp, and when she came back to her chair he noticed that her hand was concealed in the folds of her gown.

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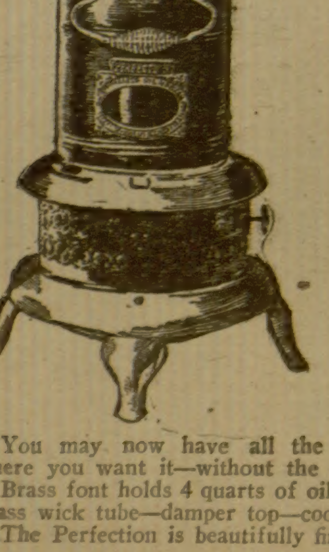

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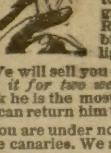

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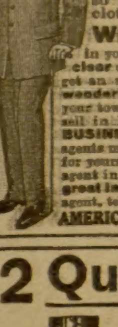

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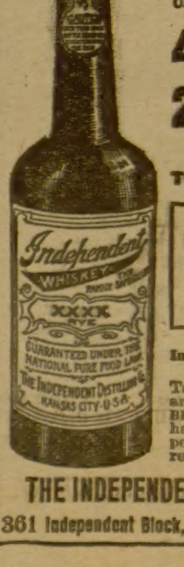

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Her face was now cold and impassive.

"You have the paper," said Chipps. "I want to see my signature, which I understand is attached to it."

"It is not on exhibition."

"Oh!" ejaculated Madam's visitor. "You are not going to let me take a squint at my honorable name?"

"It is not at all necessary."

A faint smile gathered at the corners of Jasper Chipps' mouth.

"Really, madam, you are an enigma," said he. "Let me be a little plainer. If, as I have heard, there is in the will you hold an item or clause which deprives a certain young lady of her legacy unless she wholly obeys you, I declare that my name on the document is a rank forgery."

The last vestige of color departed from Mrs. Stanley's face.

"I never signed such a document, and the will I did sign for the late Donald Steele was quite a different affair."

The woman did not speak.

"I see I have to do most of the talking," continued Jasper, with a grin. "Donald Steele left his estate unreservedly to Miss Marcella, as she was then. He read the whole will to me before I witnessed it, and to my recollection, madam, and I have one of the best memories in the world, there was no 'Clause 10' in the whole document."

"I have said that I cannot discuss this matter," said Mrs. Stanley, with great firmness. "It is my desire—shall I say command—that this interview terminate at once."

"Just a moment," said Jasper Chipps. "I am here for the purpose of vindicating my own name. If my name is attached to a paper which disinherits Donald Steele's child under certain conditions, it is, as I have said, a rank forgery."

"I will not discuss the matter," exclaimed Madam. "I don't know you, Jasper Chipps, and I never sent for you."

"Granted," smiled Chipps. "You will not show me the will?"

"I will not."

Jasper rose, and for a moment looked down upon the woman in the chair.

"There's been some dark work in this house," said he. "It's all been directed against the child of my old employer. She's been dragooned into a loveless marriage, and——"

"No insinuations, sir!" broke in Mrs. Stanley, with bitter and exasperating sternness. "This is my house, and one's house is one's castle, as well."

"I happen to know," returned Jasper, without taking notice of the last words, "I happen to know that the marriage has taken place. Miss Marcella has become the bride of Ramon Doan."

"Well," cried Mrs. Stanley, flushing to the temples, "and what are you going to do about it?"

Her language was a biting challenge.

"I will let the future answer that question," replied Jasper Chipps. "One thing is certain, madam, and that is that there will never be a honeymoon."

Mrs. Stanley pushed back her chair and stood before Chipps with the mien of an insulted queen.

"Who sent you here, sir?" she demanded.

"No one."

"Who paid you for this act? Who is your master, for it is evident that you have one."

"I bow to no man. Jasper Chipps is his own master."

"Oh," sneered the woman, "you were not sent hither by one Gilbert Montclare?"

"No man sent me."

"You know Gilbert Montclare?"

"I have that honor, madam."

"You have not come straight from him?"

"I have not."

"Well, it matters little from whom you have come," she went on. "You can go now."

But Chipps lingered.

"Madam, there's no use in fighting against fate," said he resolutely. "I came here to see the so-called will, and I shall not depart without a glimpse of it."

"Fool!" cried Mrs. Stanley, and the next moment Jasper Chipps was looking into the muzzle of a silver-chased revolver, held in the jeweled hand of the person whom he confronted.

The presentation of the deadly weapon was so sudden that Jasper Chipps could not stir.

"Forbearance has ceased to be a virtue," came over the barrel of the weapon. "You will go, Mr. Chipps, unless you want to become a subject for the coroner."

This, of course, was the last thing Chipps wanted. Life just then seemed dearer to him than it had seemed for years, and he thought with the rapidity of lightning.

"Now, you wouldn't commit murder, madam?" he said with a little laugh, which, to tell the truth, was somewhat forced. "It would be too bad to stain your imported carpet with human blood."

"I'll take care of the carpet. It's paid for," she answered.

"Oh, I don't doubt that," exclaimed Chipps. "No doubt you pay as you go, which, by the way, is the best plan in the world, but murder wouldn't look well in Lovelit place."

"Come, come," was the reply. "You will go at once, Jasper Chipps!"

"To come again?"

"When you are summoned, not a moment before."

"But, remember, you may never send for me," laughed Jasper.

The weapon seemed to move nearer his face. There was a steady hand behind it and a pair of menacing and dangerous eyes.

"You know what has happened recently in this house?" came over the revolver.

"The forced nuptials?"

"No, the flight of the bride."

Chipps, with a little start, shook his head.

"So Marcella is gone?" cried he.

"Ay, and it was a part of the plot. You know all about it!" accused Mrs. Stanley.

"Well, I glory in the young woman's cleverness. Marcella, gone? And you hold nothing but the forged will? It's too bad, eh, my dear?"

"Go, or perish!" cried Mrs. Stanley, and Chipps saw the under finger bend toward the trigger of the weapon.

He fell back and laid his hand on the doorknob.

"Don't come back, please," said the woman.

"Thanks, madam. But I sometimes turn up when and where I'm not wanted. It's a habit I have."

"Forego it," was the reply. "Go, Jasper Chipps! To remain here is death!"

Chipps opened the door, but did not take his eyes from Madam's face.

"Aha!" he suddenly exclaimed, "I see you have another visitor!"

He seemed to be looking beyond her. Deceived by his trick, Mrs. Stanley turned and looked toward the other door. In a flash Jasper Chipps leaped across the room, seized the hand that held the weapon, and wrenched it from her grasp. The next instant the white-faced woman had been crushed, speechless, into the chair, and Chipps, smiling audaciously, was standing over her.

"One of my little tricks," smiled the man. "I will now take a peep at Donald Steele's will!"

### CHAPTER XVI.

### THE ADVENTURES OF MARCELLA.

The night was dark with a threatening storm when Marcella bade adieu to the house in Lovelit place, and found herself in the heart of the great city.

Much of the metropolis was known to her, for she had spent her life within its bounds, but there were corners of which she was densely ignorant, or had heard of only through the newspapers when they detailed some of the revolting crimes bred therein.

She had an asylum in view, a place where she could hide and await events, and with her brain in a turmoil she turned her face toward that haven.

Hailing a cab, she gave certain directions and settled back into its depths.

On, on rattled the vehicle, jolting over the stones of the darkened streets till at last Marcella looked out of the little window and drew back with a little scream of terror. The locality did not look at all like the one to which she had asked to be driven. The lights were few and far between, the houses poor affairs, not like the better ones she expected to see.

With her heart in her throat she sprang forward and called to the man on the box. He gave no heed to her calls.

"Stop! stop!" commanded Marcella. "This is not the part of the city to which I want to go! This is not the vicinity of Josephine square!"

"Wot's the difference, leddy?" was the reply. "I'm givin' ye good measure for your fare, ain't I?"

"But I don't care to be in this part of the city. I paid you to take me to Josephine square!"

At that moment the cab turned into a little street, so narrow that the wheels almost touched the wall of a house.

"Villain! you're taking me wrongly," cried Marcella, tugging at the door which she found locked.

"Wait till I stop," was the reply. "Don't sing yer song too soon."

She fell back among the cushions with an audible groan.

"I'm lost, lost!" she cried. "I've fallen into the hands of a rascal of the deepest dye——"

Just then the vehicle came to a sudden stop and she was thrown forward.

As she scrambled to her feet the door was jerked open and she looked into the leering, liquor-besotted face of the driver.

She drew back with a cry, but his darting hand closed on her arm.

"This is not the place!" cried Marcella. "This looks like the edge of hades!"

"It isn't Heaven, that's a fact," laughed the brute.

"It isn't Josephine square——"

"No, it's Tinhorn boulevard," was the interruption, accompanied by a brutal laugh.

Marcella uttered a scream.

"Git out, miss. Can't wait here all night an' miss the chance o' half a dozen other good fares."

"I will not. It's infamous!" persisted Marcella, the last sign of color deserting her face.

"Oh, stop your whinin' an' git out," and suiting the command to his words the cabman jerked Marcella from the cab and she almost fell upon the sodden pavement.

She staggered to her feet as the man clambered upon the box. Her nerves were nearly gone.

"Take me to Josephine square," she pleaded. "See! I can pay you well for it."

"Wot yer got?"

The man was on the ground leering at the coins Marcella was holding out to him.

"All o' that stuff for Jo' square?" he simpered.

"Yes, and more by and by."

He seemed to hesitate.

"I can't stay in this devil's corner," said Marcella. "It's worth a woman's life and honor."

"It's not jest the cleanest place on earth," grinned the man.

"Why, then, did you bring me here?"

Just then a door opened and Marcella caught sight of a man's face partially revealed by a light in the narrow hall behind him.

Hope entered her heart for the first time in many minutes.

"Here's a bird, Joe," said the hackman at sight of the man in the doorway.

The words which Marcella was about to speak, died on her lips, and she recoiled from the leering face of the stranger.

"You'll take me to Josephine square, won't you, for the money I've offered?" she cried, appealing to the cabman.

The man in the door uttered a cry and bounded forward.

"Who hev ye fetched, Jim?" he asked, leering into Marcella's face.

"One worth her ransom, bet yer life," was the reply. "Jest happened ter pick her up; wanted ter go ter Jo' square, which proves that she's no common bird——"

"My God!" cried Marcella, staggering back.

Suddenly the hand of the unknown man encircled her wrist and she was drawn rudely forward.

"Right you are, Jim; she's a pigeon worth the pluckin'. I'll take keer o' her."

"No! no!" cried the white-faced bride. "For the love of Heaven, take me to my destination or back to the house from whence I came!"

"It's too late, dearie," grinned the other. "Come into the nest an' stay there till you're royally ransomed."

What could Marcella do? She was dragged across the brief space that intervened between the middle of the street and the doorway and heard the portal shut behind her.

She felt faint and nerveless, and reeling away, fell against the wall.

"Oh, you'll git over that by and by," leered her captor. "It's Jim what kin pick up the best birds after dark. Found you where, my leddy?"

"I live in Lovelit place——"

"Geewhilikins!" broke in the man. "Lovelit place, eh? There's where the goldbugs live."

Marcella gasped at his language as well as the fiendish face he exposed to her gaze.

"You don't intend to keep me here?" she cried.

"Not long, I hope."

"Where am I?"

"You're in Tinhorn boulevard, and in the hands of the Goldhawks of the city."

"But you will turn me loose?"

"Yes, when we're paid for it. You see, miss, we transact business on business principles. We'll insert in some o' the newspapers certain notices saying that a certain young leddy is in durance wile, an' that for a certain sum deposited somewhere, place to be stated later on in said newspapers, we'll let the young leddy go. See, miss? It's business with us. Jim's only playin' cabby to pick up wictims."

Marcella's heart sank to immeasurable depths in her bosom at these words, and she could only stare into the face of the cool villain in terror.

"So you're from Lovelit place?" resumed the man. "Then you'll fetch a good lot o' coin. Come into the next room. It's where you'll lodge while with us."

Marcella obeyed with the step of an automaton.

"There's your bed, miss," said the man pointing to a cot along the wall. "It's not as fine as the one you left in Lovelit place, but it'll do for the present. Are you hungry, miss?"

"No," said Marcella, shuddering.

"You're about the prettiest bird Jim's caught lately," continued the man. "You're one o' the upper crust, eh?"

"Go away and leave me to myself," commanded Marcella, and at sight of her face the man skulked toward the door, where he paused, with his hand on the knob.

"You'd make a good tragedy actress," he grinned. "Don't try to get out o' the cage. 'Tain't no use. The last bird tried it an' lost out dreadfully. We lost our ransom with her, for she never left the house, an' she's got no gravestone neither."

"Begone!" cried Marcella.

"Jest as you please, miss. If you want anything jest knock three times on the black spot on the wall yonder. Good night, an' pleasant dreams, that is as pleasant as ye can have in this house."

(Continued on page fifteen.)

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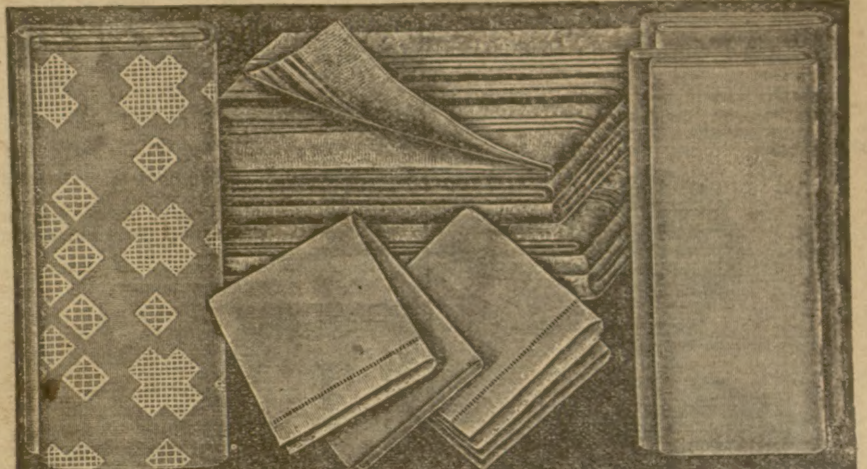

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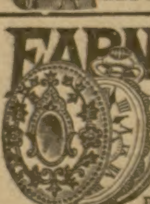

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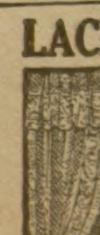

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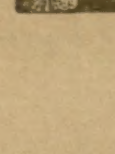

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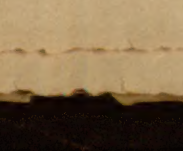

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# The Mysterious Cousin;

## Or, THE TRAGEDY OF A NIGHT

### By J. M. Merrill

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### CHAPTER VIII.

IF IT were an accident?” said the visitor, facing Huddlestone with a frowning brow and piercing gaze.

“An accident, truly,” declared the young attorney, forcing a laugh. “I hope you will permit me to explain.”

Huddlestone swung his hand to the front and laid a small, singular-looking derringer on the table.

“This is not like the other, as you perceive,” he explained. “It is the first model, and the motive power is produced by powder instead of a spring. Makes too much noise to be of use, which is my reason for discarding it.”

The speaker uttered his explanations in a rapid, nervous manner, as if anxious to get a disagreeable subject off his mind. To Gregerson all this offered a horrible suggestion to his brain. Had another murder been attempted?

“Good heavens!” exclaimed Huddlestone, looking up and catching the expression on the face of his visitor, “you cannot imagine that I meant to—to harm you?”

“It looks very much like it,” returned Gregerson with a shrug of his massive shoulders. “You are certainly meddling with dangerous toys, Don Huddlestone.”

“Not in the least dangerous if you know how to handle them, Volney.”

“It may be so; you don't seem to have mastered that art, however.” The eyes of the speaker fixed themselves on the bit of steel standing rigid and suggestive in the door-casing.

“Well, I can't blame you, old man,” and Huddlestone laughed harshly. “I am forever putting my foot in it. I have to be careful and not let Uncle Timothy see these things; he would order them thrown into the stove at once.”

“You have a secret from your uncle, then?”

Gregerson turned back into the little room. He advanced and took the derringer from where Don had laid it. There was nothing dangerous in the appearance of the small pistol. The one thing queer about it was the needle with which it was loaded.

“It's perfectly harmless now,” said Don as his friend handled the pretty toy with great timidity. “It fires only one shot, after which it has to be recharged. If you mind you may take the thing along; I have no further use for it. When the spring cannon becomes perfected these small experimentary affairs will be worthless.”

“Thanks,” uttered Gregerson, dropping the weapon into his pocket. He passed from the room, leaving Huddlestone alone.

The young attorney seemed exceedingly wrought up now that he was alone. His dark face flamed with a sudden outflow of excited feeling.

“Blame me for a fool!” he bitterly articulated. “I have made an enemy of Gregerson when it behooves me to keep on the right side of those peeple up yonder. Now, Don Huddlestone, you have made a mess of the whole thing. You'd best go slow hereafter or that big-fisted land-cruiser will make you trouble.”

Gregerson pursued his way toward Pine Tree Hill, his emotions of a conflicting nature. That the younger Huddlestone was a villain, he could no longer doubt. It should be his duty to investigate both these men. Don's apparent interest in Lettice angered and alarmed the youthful timberman.

Minwaring was not in when Gregerson called at the office. The young man turned to depart when he saw the superintendent come from the house and walk toward him. The old fellow seemed sullen and less dignified than was his wont. He came forward with a heavy, swinging stride, not noticing the man at the office door till he ran directly upon him.

“Hello!” ejaculated Minwaring, starting back a step in order to avoid a collision. “I am glad it's you, Volney. I feared you had gone back to the woods. Come inside, I have something to tell you.”

“The plot deepens,” chuckled the big superintendent when the two men were seated in the office with the door closed upon them. “I have been talking with Lettice, and find affairs much more complicated than I feared. A more consummate scoundrel than old Timothy Huddlestone doesn't live. He has laid his plans to rob the widow and the orphan; his tentacles are already fastening onto the goods and chattels of our dead friend Gideon, and unless something is done at once his villainy will succeed, and Lettice and her mother will be turned out to beg or starve.”

Minwaring spoke at a white heat, his big jaws snapping now and then to give emphasis to his husky, wrathful speech. Gregerson had never seen the old man so deeply stirred.

“You surprise me, Karl,” uttered Volney. “What are you doing to circumvent the old money-lender?”

“Not much yet. I have only got the kinks straightened out. I have worked heretofore at a disadvantage; I want help; will you give it to me?”

“Surely.”

“And you'll stand to your guns though the heavens fall?”

“To the last drop of my heart's blood, Karl.”

The two men clasped hands across the desk. Eye looked to eye, and the faces of the two men bespoke a determination not to be trifled with.

“Now tell me what you have discovered, Karl.”

“That is easy. Timothy has several mortgages on this property.”

“Why, I thought——”

“That old man Lake was out of debt and worth half a million at least. Of course you did, my boy, and so did all of us, but I find we were mistaken. In the present state of the market these mortgages, should they be foreclosed, would take everything and still leave a part of the debt unsatisfied.”

“And old Huddlestone holds these mortgages?”

“Yes. What he did not have in his own name he bought from other parties. He has placed himself in a position to dictate, and he means to sweep all this vast property into his clutches. It would be all right if he came by his holdings honestly, but I am satisfied that he did not. Now, given time, these pine lands would be worth double the claims held against them by Huddlestone. I am told by Miss Lake that he threatens to begin foreclosure proceedings at once. The lands thus pressed to a forced sale won't fetch half-price.”

Gregerson nodded assent without speaking.

“It is a shame to let them go in this way.”

“Surely it is.”

“I just learned today that a twenty thousand dollar life insurance is made to benefit the nephew. It was first made out to Mrs. Lake and afterward transferred to Donald Huddlestone.”

The old man's listener started now, and lifted a clinched hand.

“Then he is linked in with his uncle to ruin the Lakes?” he ejaculated.

“Such seems to be the case, Volney.”

“What says Mrs. Lake of the subject? Does she know, did she consent to have the life insurance changed?” asked Gregerson in eager questioning.

“Yes. You see, the old woman is weak, mentally, having been sick so much, and she readily consented to anything. It was Gideon's wish, in order to borrow money of the Huddlestones.”

“It seems that Mr. Lake was hard up for ready cash.”

“Exactly. He met with heavy losses on some town property by fire, if you remember—that was three years ago, since which time he has been on the descending scale. I have found some queer entries in the books, also, which leads me to believe that maybe Ellsworth Stormer might have aided the Huddlestones. You know, he was discharged by Gideon, and went away mad as a hornet. Doubtless the lumberman had good cause for sending the young bookkeeper about his business.”

“Undoubtedly,” agreed Gregerson.

The knowledge that old Tim's attorney nephew was the beneficiary of Mr. Lake's life insurance policy puzzled and enraged the young man.

He could now see how the trend of events connected the uncle and nephew with that wicked and causeless assassination of Mr. Lake. His compressed lip and clinched hands denoted the feeling that mastered Gregerson.

“The scoundrels!” he muttered hoarsely.

“Quite so,” and big Karl Minwaring chuckled grimly. “You will readily understand now that I have not been working in the dark, Volney.”

“Surely not. But it seems strange that the life policy should be turned over to that young scalawag of a Huddlestone. Why, he has no money to speak of.”

“Mrs. Lake explained that.”

“How?”

“It was all old Tim's plan, and Mrs. Lake's. She was the more willing that the life insurance should go to Donald, since in any case the money would not go out of the family.”

“I can't see how that follows.”

“Easy enough,” said Minwaring, smiling grimly. “Lydia Lake and old Tim had their plans all made to have the young folks—Don and Lettice—marry each other. A pretty plan wasn't it, Volney?”

### CHAPTER IX.

Gregerson was on his feet in an instant, hot and flushing with anger.

“Don't get excited, boy,” warned the old superintendent. “There isn't much likelihood of their plans working. In any event, Lettice won't hanker to wed Don Huddlestone after he is arrested for the murder of her father.”

“Arrest him at once then, Karl.”

Gregerson began pacing the floor. His face was pale, and he gnawed his lip with feverish unrest. The villainy of the Huddlestones was something terrible; and Don was pretending to be friendly with the daughter of the man he had murdered.

The incident of the morning was even more significant than he had at first supposed. A deliberate attempt had been made upon his life. Now that one murder had been consummated the cold-blooded scoundrels were not going to permit a second life to stand in the way of their schemes.

Gregerson turned to the old superintendent, after a minute, and said:

“Light has dawned at last. I understand what was meant by that incident at the house of Huddlestone a few hours ago.”

“So you have been to the Huddlestones?”

“Yes. I went there to give Don a calling down.”

“Because of his attentions to Lettice?”

“Exactly for that.”

“I am sorry you did that; I fear it was a mistake.”

“I don't think so. Don was as plausible as you please. He showed me his infernal machine, and I examined the workings of it. I am fully convinced that it was from that the death of Mr. Lake came about.”

“Convinced, eh?” and Minwaring smiled. “That is something gained at least. Tell me about it, boy.”

Gregerson lost no time in telling of what took place while he was in the room with Don Huddlestone. Karl lifted his shaggy head and chuckled when his friend had finished.

“Mighty cool, wasn't it?” he growled. “So he has more than one of these devil's instruments. What a hideous affair it is. What do you advise, Volney?”

“The immediate arrest of Don Huddlestone.”

“Him only?”

“Why, yes, I think so. You——”

“I would place the irons on both of the scamps. Leave one free and he will contrive in some way to work out the salvation of the other. To my mind old Tim is equally guilty with his nephew. It was he that engineered the life insurance business. I don't know that Don ever had a thing to do with that.”

“Very likely he had; he's capable of anything.”

“Granted, but I am not sure that it is quite time to make an arrest,” proceeded Minwaring. “I was fast for it a while ago, but now I see things coming my way so fast it might be well enough to give the rascals plenty of rope; they will hang themselves if we do.”

“And meantime leave a defenseless girl to the machinations of that scoundrel? I can't do it.”

Gregerson was still hot over the situation.

“The girl is not defenseless, my boy,” declared the older man. “You count yourself her friend at least, and I am yet a husky chap despite my years. I think it's a pity if we two ain't enough for old Tim and his sneaking nevvy. Take my advice, and give 'em a little more rope.”

Gregerson was thoughtful for some time.

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He finally decided that his old friend's advice was good. There was really no evidence to convict either Don or his uncle of the murder of Mr. Lake. It would be the wisest plan to search for more tell-tale marks ere arresting the two. And again, he could make a detective of himself and hunt the villains down. The idea was too good to be lost.

Gregerson passed from the office, fully agreeing with Minwaring that at present the two suspects should have full swing. Meantime, Gregerson resolved to keep a careful watch, and investigate every incident of the past, keeping Don and his uncle under strict surveillance.

Gregerson went immediately to the house after quitting Minwaring.

"Lettice is indisposed," said Florence, who admitted the young man. "I will call her if you like——"

"Not for the world!" exclaimed Gregerson. "I can talk with you."

The eyes of the land-cruiser followed the richly gowned Miss Iderman as she moved about the room with the grace of a queen. He had been blind to her beauty and niceties of dress until now. Her smile was like sunshine on new-mown hay, while the delicate odor of lilies seemed ever present.

He saw less and less of Lettice as the days passed, and felt in a measure aggrieved. "Poor child," he thought, "she has had so much to contend with of late it is not to be wondeerd at that she is ill."

The two talked long and earnestly of various things, scarcely once, however, dropping into confab about the knotty intricacies of the Lake business affairs.

Florence fascinated Gregerson.

He scarcely missed Lettice this afternoon with the enchanting Miss Iderman to entertain him. Stories of her life on a California ranch interested him much.

"I ran wild most of the time as you may well guess," she declared, with amused laughter. "Daddy and the rest were too much engrossed in their own affairs to take heed of poor, insignificant me. My pony was as fleet as a deer, and the way we scoured the hills and rode into canyons in chase of wild beasts was frightful to think of. Anyhow, a friend up from 'Frisco declared it was positively indecent the way I took to horses and the outdoor life of the hills. He said I was making a boy of myself, and that my face was acquiring the tanned color of a rawhide. Think of it, and he a nice city gentleman."

"I'm afraid he was no gentleman," said Volney.

"He thought he was at any rate. He rode with me sometimes, and invited me down to see his mother at 'Frisco. Do you think I went?"

"Undoubtedly." An amused look filled the eyes of Gregerson.

"Not for a minute. I'll tell you why. We Idermans have pride, even if we do live like mountain sheep, and glory in an airy existence. That chap from town patronized me, and I hate to be patronized. When I refused his invitation he wanted me to marry him. What do you think of that?"

"I think he showed good taste in one respect at least," and Gregerson cast a longing look into the depths of her black eyes.

"He went away, vowing—think of that—vowing he would tame me yet, and fetch me a captive to his castle in 'Frisco. I laughed at him. He wrote me after that, but I never answered. When, some time later, he wrote again saying that he should come and fetch his mother I quite collapsed."

"You scarcely look like one who would faint easily," said Volney.

"Oh, I didn't faint—never did such a thing in my life."

"I can well believe that, Miss Iderman."

"You think I am rude and mannish?" She lifted her slim shoulders and thrust out her chin, revealing even pearls between the curl of her lips.

"No, no, I protest," he cried quickly.

"But you said as much. I don't care. I am bound to have my own sweet will though the heavens fall. I shouldn't know what to do with a husband trailing after me, suggesting this, that and the other. Of course he would never dare order me about."

"In case he did, then what?" A half-smile wreathed the lips of her listener. She was certainly entertaining him most fully. Never before had she gone into a history of her past life as today. He was very much interested and entertained.

"Oh, don't ask me, Mr. Gregerson." She blushed prettily and hung her head, the long-lashed eyes studying a figure in the carpet at her dainty feet.

"It was rude of me I suppose," he said. "You interest me very much. I should like to know what happened when the man from 'Frisco came, accompanied by his mother. No doubt he fetched her to plead his cause."

"Go ask the winds, I'll never tell."

"Then he did fetch his mother. You did——"

"I did what was best, fled from the scene like a coward," said the girl, lifting her head with a cheery laugh. "Lettice was surprised that I got here ahead of time. I never even explained to her how it came about. I packed up and fled to avoid my 'Frisco lover. Please don't breathe a word of this to my cousin or aunt though."

"Certainly not, Flor—Miss Iderman."

"Good boy. You have been my friend from the start, Volney, and I mean that nothing shall mar that friendship. You see how recklessly I have confided in you; now let's be quits; tell me of yourself."

"Why, I don't know about that——"

"You have a past of course; what man has not?" and an amused twinkle interspersed itself with her mellow laugh. "I'm not seeking to know your heart follies, Volney—may I call you that?"

"Sure, and you shall be Florence henceforth to me," he articulated, with the eagerness of a boy. "Friends we are bound to be, and I tell you truly that I am glad you ran away from that insolent 'Friscoan."

"Are you? Then you don't think me a coward?"

"On the contrary, to me, you seem very much a heroine."

"Oh, dad, go tell the marines!" her laugh tantalized him.

She sat with one foot tapping the carpet, her knees crossed, the curved outlines of her sinuous figure resting in easy grace against the stuffed fullness of the chair. Such elegance of manner, such delicate curves and grace of movement struck him as singular in one who had been born and bred in the wilds.

He leaned closer and took her hand, long, slender and attractive. What a veritable wild flower she was—his mountain rose!

"I am glad you made your escape. That fellow——"

"May find me here," she suggested. "He is very persistent."

"But he does not know——"

"Where I am? No, nor does a single member of my family, although the good daddy might guess all right enough. You see, I wished to get beyond reach of a pestilential nuisance like Peverill. If he should find me I am afraid of what might happen." She sighed deeply and turned her dark face aside. "I—I need a friend, that is flat."

"And you have one in me, Florence," he said, with more eloquence and meaning than he intended. "Let what will come, depend on me," lifting her slim hand, pressing the fingers against his lips.

The creak of an opening door startled him. He glanced toward the entrance to see standing on the threshold a vision of golden loveliness. It was Lettice Lake, who advanced silently and confronted the twain.

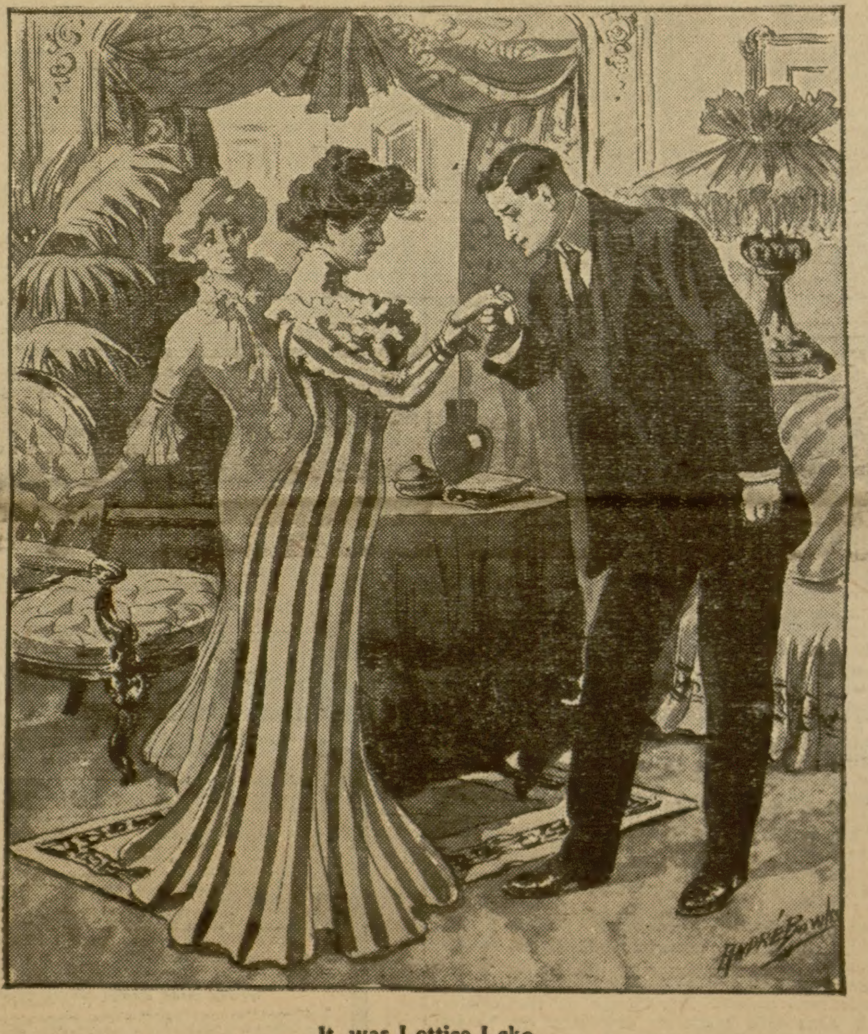
## CHAPTER X.

"Why, Lettice!" exclaimed Miss Iderman, "how you startled me. I thought your headache would keep you in your room till night—it usually does, you know."

The fair Californian sprang briskly up and took her cousin's hand.

Gregerson fidgeted in his chair. Lettice had caught them in a very lover-like attitude. He felt guilty and not quite justified. He cast a keen, sidelong glance at his betrothed, who scarcely seemed to notice his presence, although a tense, hard look crossed her face.

"I came for the cologne—no, my head is no better." Crossing to a table the girl took up a small vial and retreated from the room, without looking a second time at the land-cruiser. Her cool demeanor froze both occupants of the grand parlor. Florence lifted her dark brows and cast a quick side-glance at Volney.



It was Lettice Lake.

"Poor child!" cooed Miss Iderman, "she suffers dreadfully at times."

Volney half-rose as if to go in pursuit of Lettice. A second thought cast him back to his chair. His face was pale, and he gnawed his lips fiercely. The look on the pained, startled face of Lettice quite touched a tender spot in the man's soul.

"It is this way," said Florence, coming near to the young woodsman, her dark face glowing with feeling. "Cousin Letty is very easily affected. This mixed state of her father's affairs has about prostrated her. Aunt Lydia isn't much help to her; in fact she is quite like a helpless child, and so everything devolves on my poor cousin. I have tried to aid her in a woman's way; but I am not up in business affairs; that is, affairs pertaining to estates where legal technicalities sometimes count for much. My life among the California hills wasn't such as to give me legal lore."

"No," said Volney, weakly sympathetic.

"While I have done my best for Letty, she seems to lean on the strong arm of a man—Mr. Donald Huddlestone. He is a lawyer, and is advising with my cousin."

"His visits are frequent?"

"Almost daily."

Gregerson frowned annoyedly. Florence half-smiled as she saw the expression of disgust on the face of her companion.

"I am not pleased with this," said Gregerson, with an assumption of injured innocence. "By what right does this man come to Pine Tree Hill? He does not consult with the administrator, old Karl; instead he goes to this child and pours some sort of stuff in her ears that may be the means of her ruin. I will not stand it."

"What can you do, Volney?"

A half-smile parted the lips of Miss Iderman as her eyes sought his face. She seemed to think it more amusing than otherwise, this little comedy of errors going on about her.

"I have a right to know why that man comes here," declared Gregerson. "And but for Lettice's indisposition I should talk to her."

"Like a Dutch uncle I suppose," and Miss Iderman's merry laugh rang out.

Gregerson bit his lip and frowned.

"Pardon me, Mr. Gregerson," she cried quickly, all contrition in a moment. "I am aware that it is serious enough and I can't blame you. Don Huddlestone is an attractive man—handsome in a way, and Lettice——"

But her visitor was going, his eyes glittering with feeling. He seemed stirred to the depths by some unseen power. "He's jealous!" thought the girl. Aloud, she said: "I trust we shall see you again soon, Volney?"

"I can't say. I may not come again ever." With that he bowed himself out.

"The man is really jealous of handsome Don," laughingly commented Miss Iderman. "Well, he may be, for a nicer gentleman I never met than this young Gardenfield attorney. There seems to be a clashing of interests all about. I wonder how it is all to end. I think I shall have a hearing that will astonish the natives when everybody comes into his own. Poor Lettice!"

Volney Gregerson rushed to the Lake stables and led out the best saddle horse in the bunch. He was soon mounted and riding away. As he dashed past the stately front of the lumberman's big house he tossed a hurried, perhaps worried, glance toward the building. At an open window stood a female in gray, waving a handkerchief. It was Florence, and the young man's heart gave a pleased throb, although he wondered why Lettice was not in evidence. Of course he should have made allowance for the girl's headache, but he did not.

Answering the handkerchief flutter with a toss of his hand Gregerson dashed onward and soon swept down an incline into a stretch of fire-blackened woods. He was aiming toward Gardenfield twenty miles away. His mind was made up to do something desperate. He resolved to save Lettice from that man even though his own prospects might in no way be brightened by the act.

(Continued on page fourteen.)

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When some people talk it is a waste of time to yawn.

Ice for the Christmas skates is another imperative need.

The more talk it takes to run things the slower they move.

Half the kissing done in the world is a pleasureless duty.

If a man ever gives up a bad habit it is because he's tired of it.

The bravest dentist isn't anxious to look *into the jaws of death.*

The man who marries for money only would take candy from a baby.

Instead of following at somebody else's heels get busy and set the pace.

Many a man who tries to pose as a lion wouldn't even make a good rabbit.

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A woman never feels hurt if the slippers a man gives her for Christmas are several sizes too small.

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Almost every man knows what would be a fine Christmas present for "her" if he could afford the money.

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# In African Jungles;

## *Or, A Girl's Fight for Honor*

### *By Colonel Alfred B. Tozer.*

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Begun in No. 45, November 6. Subscriptions can begin with that issue, or back copies can be obtained from news stands, or our agents, or by mail from office of publication.

### CHAPTER XVI.

### NATIVE SHOOTS TO KILL.

BEMENT'S one idea, now, was to reach the girl in white before she could disappear, as she had done on the previous occasion.

He wondered at the courage which presumed to show a light there. Bement listened for shots, fearing that his own guard might shoot the girl. He was certain that the guard who had been left to watch with the wounded man could not fail to see the torchlight.

Indeed, the natives who had come in with the stranger might be there still, might be ready to advance upon the girl. Or there might be other man-eaters about. Bement lost no time in getting out of the cave and sliding down the steep wall which led to the ledge where the girl stood.

She heard him coming, but did not attempt to move away. Indeed, she did not even turn her head as he came up to her.

"Narrayh," she said, "you must help me to carry him to some of these openings in the walls. I'm afraid he's seriously injured. And the leopard is dead."

Bement did not move. His eyes were fastened on the beautiful face of the girl. She seemed to him then the fairest creature the sun shone on. Slender, lithe, graceful, perfect of feature, he thought she combined all the graces of all the women he had ever met! But, then, it must be remembered that Bement was young, and that he had been doing quite a lot of thinking about the mysterious girl in white!

In a moment the girl turned her face, and Bement found himself looking into a pair of the most wonderful blue eyes—which fell upon him at first with indifference, then enlarged and stared into his own in unmistakable fright.

"Pardon me," said Bement, blunderingly, "but I don't see the—the person you were addressing. Perhaps I can be of service to you."

The girl stepped back at the sound of his voice and lowered the torch, as if meditating flight in the darkness.

"I don't understand," said the girl, blushing, "why our carriers are not here. They came in with uncle. I saw some of them with him on the rim, just before the daylight faded."

Bement stood staring at the girl with many questions on his lips. If the wounded man was her relative, was she cognizant of the plan to murder him and his attendants at daylight? Where had the natives who had come in with the stranger gone to? These were the important questions.

"I would suggest," said Bement, "that we ought to get your uncle into some safe and comfortable place before trying to solve any mysteries. He seems to be badly injured, and, besides, this is a dangerous spot."

The girl, shrinking a moment before, anxiety and despair on her face, faced Bement with a quick determination in her eyes.

"I don't know," she said, "whether I ought to receive any service at your hands. I am not quite certain that uncle would approve of it."

Bement had his own ideas as to how the uncle had gained knowledge of the crater, and also had positive evidence as to his wicked intentions, so he thought it rather nervy of the girl to make such a show of picking her company, under the circumstance. He made no reply for some moments, during which the girl bent closer over the injured man.

He did not know what reply to make. He was a fugitive from justice, and of course believed that it was this the girl was referring to. How she knew, he did not stop to reason out. He was certain that the letter found on the floating island had been prepared through her agency. Why should she warn him then and reproach him now?

Then, in a moment, his strength and manhood came back to him.

"If your uncle objects to me," he said, "after he recovers, I promise not to annoy him by my presence. At this time, however, he ought not to be left unconscious here. If your carriers are not at hand, I can convey him to a safe place—in fact, to the cave he was seeking when the leopard sprang upon him."

The girl eyed the young man gravely for a moment, then her eyes fell.

"You are Louis V. Bement?" she asked, then.

Bement bowed.

"I don't think I ought to trust you," she said, then. "You came in, a part of the way, with Morris, the diamond expert, and you of course know what he expects to find here?"

"But we mustn't leave this man here while we——"

The girl cut him short again.

"You must know, too, what we are here after. Diamonds! If uncle should recover and go to the diamond mine, or if I should find my way there, you might bring your party in and rob us. You have a very large party not far away."

"I am glad to hear that," replied Bement, "But this is all tommyrot. Let me assist your uncle now, and we can settle the rest after he is out of danger. Have you any idea where your men are?"

The girl shook her head.

"I am afraid," she replied, "that I shall see no more of them. The killing of an employer by a leopard is a serious thing in the jungle."

Without another word Bement lifted the prostrate man in his arms and began climbing the slope to the mouth of the cave.

The girl stood as if dazed by this masterful action, but presently gave her assistance and the wounded man was laid at the back end of the cavern. When the girl saw the leopard kittens she took them into her arms and brushed her face against their furry backs.

"Aren't they beautiful?" she cried. "The poor little things!"

Bement looked at the picture under the light of the torch, and repeated, "Beautiful!" but did not specify whether he referred to the kittens or not!

"They are orphans," he said, "and I don't know what to do with them. I can't find it in my heart to kill them."

"Why," said the girl, "I thought you were all under a pledge to kill——"

She stopped suddenly and looked down at the man, groaning on the rock.

"I can't see why human life should be less sacred than that of these——"

The girl was not getting along very well in her talk. Bement received the idea that she suspected him and his friends of a plot to kill some one, possibly her uncle, and his mind stopped there, so far as that subject was concerned. The girl refused to say another word on the subject, and Bement knew that it would be useless to attempt to undeceive her there and then.

The young man found that the stranger had been injured in both legs by the fall, and his throat had been somewhat lacerated by the leopard. There were also internal injuries which threatened to prove fatal.

"I shall be obliged to leave you for a few moments," he said to the girl. "My men are not far away, and I'll bring them here, with your permission. They may be able to assist me. Anyway, the small emergency case I have with me is in their care. One of them is wounded, probably by a bullet from a gun held by some member of your uncle's party, but the other is strong and willing, though I confess that I can't make him understand many of my wishes."

"I was not aware that there had been any firing," replied the girl. "I did not come in with uncle, but——"

Again that unaccountable pause.

"You have been here all alone?" asked Bement.

The girl made no reply, and the young man set out toward the cup of the crater, where his men were. It was dark, and the small electric lantern he carried gave only a glimmer. As he advanced he listened for wild animal sounds, fearful that he might be attacked in spite of his light.

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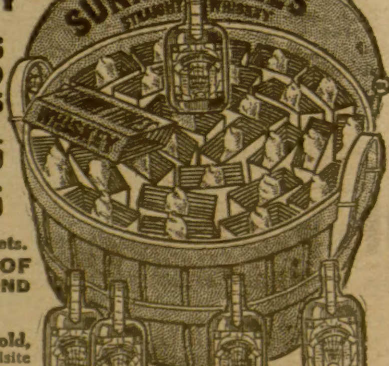

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the rim, he heard the hoarse trumpeting of an elephant. Nearer, a lion was awakening the forest with his mighty voice. No natives were in the crater, so far as Bement could ascertain, save those who had come in with him. The ones attached to the wounded stranger had evidently fled.

Bement found the native sitting patiently by his wounded mate, unmoved by the shooting which had taken place. He explained in the sign language that he had fired at a man who was skulking in the bushes, and pointed out to the south side of the crater. Bement hastened in that direction.

To his dismay he found that the native had taken excellent aim. The body of his victim lay with hands clutching a hole in the breast which must have caused instant death. Bement held the light down and examined the features. Then he started back in wonder. The face was that of a white man!

The features were those of an elderly man with a smooth-shaven, clean-cut face. He was dressed in clothes of excellent material, and a diamond ring of great value flashed on the little finger of his right hand.

Bement had no means of knowing how he came there, or who he was. It might be possible that the girl could solve the mystery, but the young man dreaded to ask her the question. If the dead man had been anything to her, the discovery of his death would be a great shock—a shock which might well be delayed until her anxiety over the living became less tense.

The body was carried to the cup and left there, covered with undergrowth and stones, until some plan could be decided upon. Often Bement wished for the self-confident sense of Kalkenbrenner or Morris. He did not know what to do.

The body thus disposed of, Bement and the guard carried the wounded man to the cave where the girl and the other wounded man had been left. It seemed to him that his flight was mixing him a good deal with the affairs of others in which he would have no interest except in a casual way under normal conditions.

The girl sat by the injured man's side, paler than when she had been left alone with him. The man was weaker. It did not seem possible that he could recover, still Bement did what he could for him. There was very little sleep in the cave that night. In fact, the leopard kittens were the only sleepers, and now and then they cried out as if missing their mother and the sustenance she was wont to bring.

"If anything serious should happen here," said Bement to the girl, as they sat by the side of the wounded man, "and I should send out the news, I would not know what name to give to your uncle—or—or to you."

## CHAPTER XV.

## A GATHERING OF ELEPHANTS.

The girl looked up sadly. Bement noted how haggard her face was under the uncertain light of the torch. He pitied her with all his heart.

"I'm afraid I've given you the wrong idea," she said. "This is my father."

Bement saw how far gone the man was, and pitied the girl more than ever. And it is said that pity is akin to love!

"I hope," he said, gently, "that there will be no necessity of sending out unwelcome news. We must do what we can to bring him back to health. It is a wonder that he was not instantly killed, for the leap was a long one, and the fall heavy. I thought it was all over with him."

"My uncle," continued the girl, "is in a bad plight, and wouldn't mind having the news of his death sent out. Perhaps I was thinking of that. Don't you think it terrible when a living man wants to be reckoned with the dead?"

Bement was not very clear as to the meaning of the girl, who seemed to be greatly agitated. Still, he gathered from her talk the impression that the uncle was in some way a menace to herself and her father.

He wondered if she would feel any charity for the man when she knew that he was lying dead out in the crater cup. For he was now certain that the dead man was the uncle who had wished the world to believe him dead. After all, the telling of the shooting might not be so disagreeable a task. The girl might not take it to heart.

"Perhaps I am wrong in bringing uncle into our talk," she said, "but there are some things you ought to know. His influence over father has been for the worse, though he has always been more than thoughtful of me."

Gazing into the girl's fresh face, fresh and sweet, though now lined with care, the young man could not imagine how any human being could be anything else but thoughtful of such a creature. But he did not say so. The time for tender sayings had not yet arrived.

"Is your uncle in here with you?" he asked, thinking that the things might as well be over with. "Is he here in the crater?"

The girl nodded.

"And he is after diamonds?"

"Certainly. I think that men must have gone diamond mad."

Bement hesitated. He wanted the girl to know the truth, but he did not wish to cause her unnecessary pain by being too abrupt.

"And your father came in here with him?"

"Yes—unwillingly."

"But that seems hardly——"

"Oh, but if you were innocent, and a man could send you to prison, and you were trying with all your might to place the blame for a—a crime where it belongs, and you thought you could clear your name from blame, and right a wrong by coming into a place—a place even so awful as this—I'm sure you would come!"

The girl spoke fiercely, and at the close covered her face with her hands. Bement sat looking at her like one in a trance. How was she able to state his case so fully, while setting it out before him as the case of another man? Who was this girl who flitted so strangely about the jungles, seemingly immune from danger of any kind? Who was this child who had read him a leaf from the book of his own life?

"I understand the situation," he said, after a moment's thought. "You know my name. Do you know why I am here?"

"Yes, I know why you are here," was the reply. "You are here because money was stolen from the vault of the Cosmos Trust Company. You are here because you, an innocent man, do not relish being placed in prison while awaiting the slow process of the law. I saw you at Mombasa and knew why you were coming in with Kalkenbrenner."

"You know that I am innocent?" repeated Bement, in a daze.

"Yes, I know that you are innocent."

"But how do you know it? What possible interest could you have in finding out about me? Tell me how you came to this knowledge!"

"I know that you are innocent," replied the girl, "because I know that another person committed the theft."

Bement sprang to his feet. This seemed to be too good to be true. To flee from Chicago to the wilds of Africa to find vindication!

"Then," he said, "what you know will clear me of suspicion, and I can go back with an honorable name?"

The girl shuddered and covered her face with her hands again. Bement looked at her bright head, bent low in grief, feeling like a criminal. It had been his words that had brought out this despair.

"Never mind," he said, consolingly, and wishing that he dared to take her into his arms, "my vindication will come."

The wounded man groaned and beckoned Bement with his finger. His throat had been so lacerated by the teeth of the leopard that he could not speak. He looked eagerly into the young man's face as he bent over him. The girl came and stood by him.

"I think," she said, "that father wants to know if you have seen uncle in here. He is anxious about him."

Bement saw that the moment he had been dreading had come. He must tell of the dead man in the cup of the crater.

"A man I took to be your uncle," he began, with the eyes of both fixed upon him, "fired on one of my guards, and wounded him. Later on, he attacked another guard down at the little camp that we made. There was shooting, during my absence, and all of it was not ineffectual. Your uncle——"

"He is dead?" asked the girl.

Bement bowed.

"Shot through the heart," he said.

The girl threw herself on her knees and raised her hands to Heaven.

"Thank God!" she cried. "Thank God!" Then she threw herself down again and sobbed.

"I'm a wicked girl," she said, in explanation, "but uncle was a bad man. He hounded my father into this, and he would have kept him on the rack all through his life."

"The quicker such men are disposed of," said Bement, "the better it is for the world."

The wounded man looked grateful for the information.

"Now we'll go back home!" cried the girl.

She lifted her father's hand and pressed it to her lips.

"Your days of trouble are over," she said. "Oh, don't you see," she added, turning to Bement, "that this makes everything so different for us all?"

"For me?"

Bement began to understand in some way the shadow which had hung over the father and daughter had cast its blight over him.

"The man who died out there," she said, "was Theo. Kilrain, brother of the president of the Cosmos Trust Company. He was my uncle, my mother's brother."

It was all a muddle to Bement.

"But how does all this affect my case?" he asked. "Why don't you make it clear to me? Why don't you tell me what your name is?"

"My father is Dawson Wilson," replied the girl. "I am Florence Wilson."

"Why," said Bement, "you are the Elephant Lady? Your father is the famous wild animal trainer! I begin to see how you lived here immune from danger!"

"I have lived with wild animals all my life," replied the girl. "I have been over this country with my father many times. We know every foot of the district between the lakes and the coast. And so, when this diamond craze began, and father found himself at the mercy of a wicked man, we came in together. It was necessary that Theodore Kilrain should disappear for a time. After the robbery——"

"Do you mean," asked Bement, "that the brother of the president of the trust company committed the crime with which I was charged?"

"I can't tell you," replied Florence. "We are all mixed up together in the robbery, but when father recovers it will all come out right. I am sure of that."

"You know, of course, that President Kilrain is making his way in here with the Kalkenbrenner party, ostensibly after me?"

"Oh, yes, but that is not his true motive. I can't tell you anything more now."

Bement was more puzzled than ever. He wanted to ask the girl a hundred questions, but refrained. He wanted to know how Theodore Kilrain had brought a man like Dawson Wilson, an animal trainer every bit as famous as Kalkenbrenner, to do his dirty work. He wanted to know why the girl had warned him by letter. But he could only sit and puzzle over the situation. His brain brought back no answer. He sat all night by the injured man, with the girl lying in a sleep of exhaustion not far

(Continued on page ten.)

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### Eye for Business.

There was a mighty collision between the sturdy warriors of the gridiron and teeth flew around the field like grains of corn.

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed the little man in the grand stand. "That's the best I have seen for a long time."

The crowd was disgusted.

"And you stand there and laugh when a score of men are losing their teeth?" they demanded savagely. "Are you a brute?"

The little man laughed all the louder.

"No, I'm a dentist," he said simply.

### It Never Fails.

"All signs fail in dry weather," quoted the superstitious person.

"Except lager-beer signs," amended the thoughtful thinker. "And the dryer the weather the better they seem to flourish."

### Woman's Mathematics.

"Women, as a rule," remarked the moralizer, "have poor heads for mathematics."

"True," rejoined the demoralizer, "but they try awfully hard to make their own figures count."

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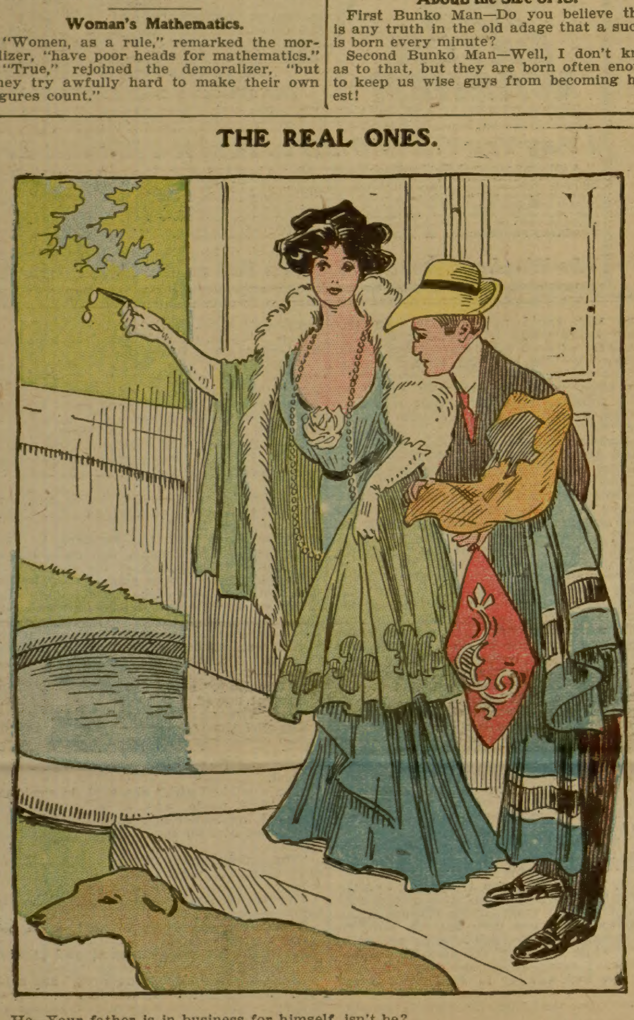
### About the Size of It.

First Bunko Man—Do you believe there is any truth in the old adage that a sucker is born every minute?

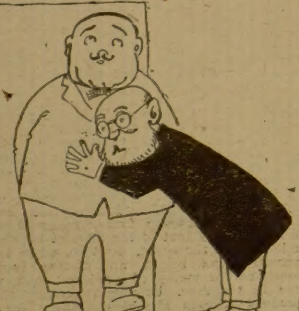
Second Bunko Man—Well, I don't know as to that, but they are born often enough to keep us wise guys from becoming honest!

## THE REAL ONES.



He—Your father is in business for himself, isn't he?
She—Oh, no, for mother and us girls.

### Common Expression.



"Getting inside information."

### Willing to Support Her.

Two young ladies boarded a crowded street car and were obliged to stand. One of them, to steady herself, took hold of what she supposed was her friend's hand. They had stood thus for some time, when, on looking down, she discovered that she was holding a man's hand. Greatly embarrassed, she exclaimed: "Oh! I've got the wrong hand!"

Whereupon the man, with a smile, stretched forth his other hand, saying: "Here is the other one, madam."

### An Old Story.

"I'm introducing a brand-new invention —a combined talking machine, carpet sweeper, and a letter opener," said the agent, stepping briskly into an office.

"Got one already," answered the proprietor. "I'm married!"

### Still Knocking.

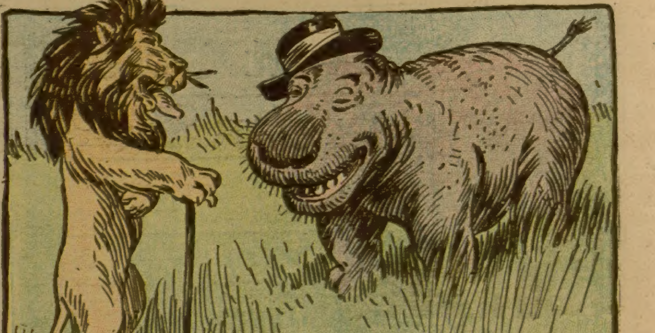
Mrs. Stubb—Just to think, John. The great polar explorer states that there are spots up in the far North where it would be impossible to open your mouth without freezing to death.

Mr. Stubb—Ah, now I understand, Maria.

Mrs. Stubb—Understand what?

Mr. Stubb—Why it is that women never try to discover the North Pole.

## POLITICS AS IT IS PLAYED.



Hippo—I see that Mr. Monk beat you for alderman of the fourth jungle.

Leo—Yes. I was running all right when I learned to show my teeth and say "dee-lighted," but when he hung himself by his tail and shook hands with four voters at once he had me skinned a mile.

### A Family Affair.

Rich Uncle—You might as well stop mooning about Miss Beauty. She hasn't been in love with you, after all. She's been after the money she thought you would inherit from me.

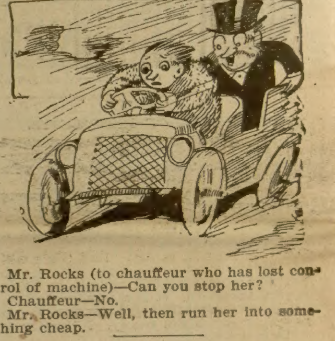
Nephew—Impossible! Why do you think so?

Rich Uncle—I have proposed to her myself and been accepted.

## Three Days' Drink Cure.

NEW YORK, Nov. 30.—Edward Woods, who was a heavy liquor drinker for many years, was completely cured in 72 hours by a method which has since been successfully employed in thousands of cases. The treatment is now perfected so that physicians say it can be given at home with positive success, with or without the drinker's knowledge. Leading medical authorities state that with elimination of the alcohol poison, many other ills are naturally cured, also there is wonderful improvement in mental and physical working ability. Life is prolonged 5 to 50 years. The cure is permanent; the person detests anything alcoholic, preferring water, tea and other temperance drinks. So enthusiastic is Mr. Woods, whose address is 534 Sixth Ave., R74, New York City, that he has published a book giving details of his own case and describing cure. This he will mail free, to anyone who writes.

## Quick Decision.



Mr. Rocks (to chauffeur who has lost control of machine)—Can you stop her?

Chauffeur—No.

Mr. Rocks—Well, then run her into something cheap.

### The New Idea.

Mrs. Gadd—Did you ever! Mrs. Newed has had her bridal slippers silver plated.

Mrs. Gabb—Land sakes! I'm glad there wasn't any such silly fashion when I was married.

Little Johnny (moving uneasily)—So'm I!

### FREE ASTHMA CURE.

D. J. Lane, a chemist, at 115 Lane Bldg., St. Marys, Kansas, manufactures a remedy for Asthma in which he has so much confidence that he sends a $1 bottle by express to anyone who will write for it. His offer is that he is to be paid for it if it cures, and the one taking the treatment is to be the judge.

### A Different Kind.

Maeola—The couple who are going to take a wedding trip in the groom's aeroplane will have a nice little receptionroom fitted up on the airship.

Marion—Indeed! That will be a regular sky parlor.

### No Excuse.

Guest (angrily)—Your charge for three days' board is outrageous—a regular swindle, sir!

Hotel Proprietor—You must remember that hotel charges are not based on what a guest consumes, but on what is provided. The waste of food at hotels is enormous.

Guest—Then why don't you cook it better?

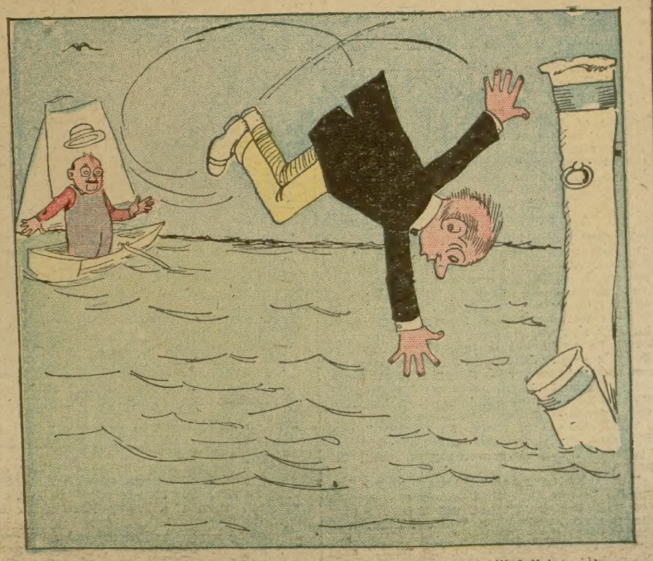
### Fault of the Range.

Mrs. Newed—George, dear, that range we bought last week is no good. We'll have to get another one.

Newed—Why, darling, what's wrong with it? It's one of the best made.

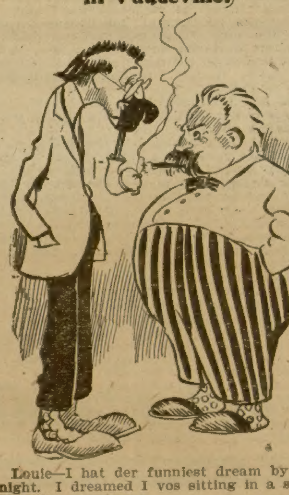
Mrs. Newed—Well, I can't help that. I tried to bake a lemon pie in it this morning and it came out a pudding.

## WARNED.



Man in Boat—Look out, mister! Stop right where ye are, or ye'll fall inter the water!

### In Vaudeville.



Louie—I hat der funniest dream by last night. I dreamed I vos sitting in a street car mit my pajamas.

Heine—An' you didn't know you vas dreaming?

Louie—Oh, I knew I vas dreaming because I hat a seat. Haw, haw!

### The Downward Path.

Mrs. Mulligan—Mrs. O'Hooligan, I'm jist afther comin' from th' perlice station, an' they have your son Moike there dhrunk as a lord. He was arristed this evening.

Mrs. O'Hooligan—Moy! Moy! Dhrunk, is he? An' it isn't a week, Mrs. Mulligan, since he promised me he'd kape out o' pollyticks.

### LADIES, PRESERVE YOUR YOUTHFUL APPEARANCE.

Madame Mignette's Beauty Cream and Skin Food removes every defect, spot, freckle, pimple, blemish or wrinkle, leaving the skin soft, clear and smooth. It is perfectly harmless and will not injure the most delicate skin. It preserves and brings back the youthful glow to the face and ruddiness to the cheeks, preserving it in this condition until extreme old age. This preparation has been used for years and hundreds are now using it and are more than delighted with the results. Send us ten (10) cents for formula which you can have filled at any drug store at a very small cost. Do not delay, but write at once. Box 491, Blairsville, Pa.

### Declines to Claim a Fortune.

Elsie—Why is Clara always so short of money? Didn't her father leave her a lot?

Madge—Yes, but you see she's not to get it till she's thirty, and she'll never own up to that.

### No Place for a Doctor.

"You say this is a healthy place," remarked the would-be investor; "yet the man next door looks as if he wouldn't live a week. How do you explain that?"

"Oh," replied the real estate dealer, "that chap isn't sick—he is starving to death. He's the only doctor in town."

### Thought of Her.

Mother—Tommy, have you eaten all your candies without even thinking of your little sister?

Tommy—Oh, no, mamma. I was thinking about her the whole time. I was afraid she'd come before I had finished.

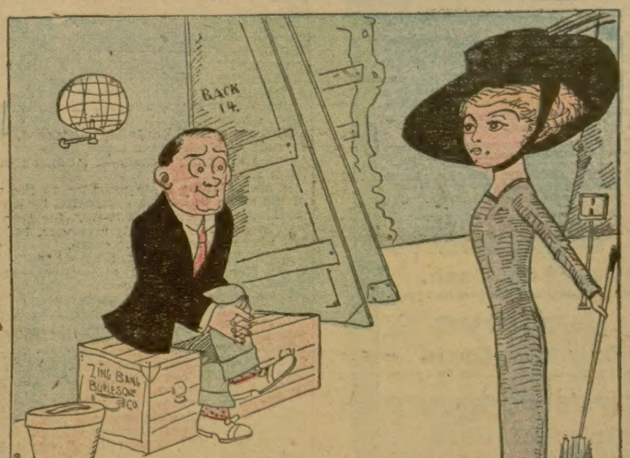
### An Explosion.

Mary—Please, sir, the oil stove has gone out.

Master—Well, take a match and light it again.

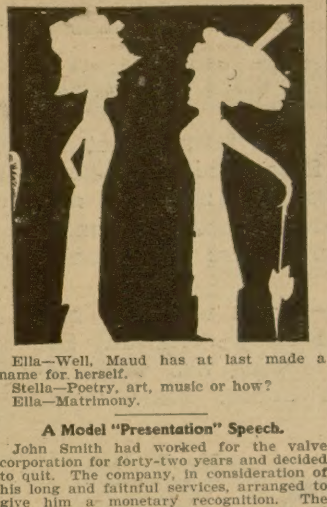
Mary—Yes, sir, but it's gone out through the roof.

## REMOVABLE.



Sweet Singer—How long has the leading lady had such a pretty complexion?
Comedian—Oh, off and on for six months.

### Easy.



Ella—Well, Maud has at last made a name for herself.

Stella—Poetry, art, music or how?

Ella—Matrimony.

### A Model "Presentation" Speech.

John Smith had worked for the valve corporation for forty-two years and decided to quit. The company, in consideration of his long and faitnful services, arranged to give him a monetary recognition. The superintendent of the works, a German and an extra good mechanic, was asked to present it. He was advised to use a little sentiment in making the presentation speech, and this is the way he did it:

"John, you haff work for the company over forty years?"

"Yes."

"You are going to quit?"

"Yes."

"Vell! They are so tam glad of it that they asked me to hand you this hundred dollars."

### A Happy Thought.

Treasurer Below Par Railroad—Let me help you to some more of the money.

First Director—No, thank you. I have all I can spend without attracting attention.

Treasurer—Permit me——

Second Director—No, no! Thanks, no. I couldn't carry another cent. Pockets all bursting now. Same way with all the others.

Treasurer (in despair)—What shall I do with all this pile? It's ten times too much for the sinking fund.

First Director (after deep meditation)—By Jove! I have it. Let's declare a dividend.

### Marvelous Performers.

Minks (at a variety performance)—Those Japanese gymnasts go ahead of anything I ever saw in ground and lofty tumbling. Did you see that little fellow place three ladders, one on top of the other, and run up and down them without losing his balance?

Jinks—Yes, indeed. Wonderful! I believe those fellows could safely go down a factory fire escape.

### Just a Theory.

Professor—Suppose an irresistible force encountered an immovable body, what would be the result?

Student—I don't know exactly, but I imagine it would be something like the meeting of two rival arctic explorers.

### Genius Defined.

"One writer says that genius is the capacity for taking pains. Genius, however, has never been satisfactorily defined."

It's simple enough. Genius is the capacity for existing without regular meals.

### Honest George.

The Woman—George, this is the anniversary of the day on which I promised to be yours. Have you forgotten it?

The Brute—No, my dear, I couldn't. But I've forgiven it.

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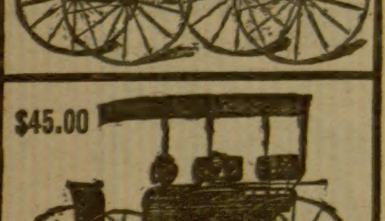

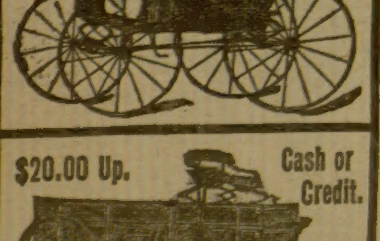
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## In African Jungles.

(Continued from page eleven.)

away, and the guard pacing back and forth.

At dawn Florence awoke with a start and hurried to the opening, where she stood for a moment, listening intently. There was a chorus of birds, and deeper, farther away, the larger creatures of the jungle were greeting the morning. Above all the wild medley of sounds came the trumpet-call of an elephant, high, low, rumbling. Without a word the girl motioned to Bement and he followed her.

She led the way to the ledge, down to the bottom of the crater, and into a tangle of brush which hugged the wall, or seemed to do so. For there was no wall there. In the distant past a spring of lava had bubbled there and burned a passage through the rocks.

This passage was not difficult, nor was it long, for the rim of the mountain shrank here to a hundred yards in width at the bottom. The passage ended in a canyon which was cut in between two foothills. Water had followed the lava, and had washed out the soil, leaving precipitous walls perhaps a hundred feet in height.

Through this canyon the girl led the way until she reached a foothill near the level of the plateau. Then she pointed westward.

"There is a party coming," she said. "The elephants are warning each other. If a large herd gathers they will attack the newcomers."

"Can nothing be done to warn them?" asked Bement, thinking only of his sister and Clellie. "Something must be done!"

The huge creatures gathered fast. A couple of miles away the leaders of the party came into view. Which party it was Bement could not determine, but he knew that unless something was done death lay in the path of the travelers.

### CHAPTER XVI.

### A BATTLE WITH LIONS.

Bement thought fast as the herd gathered and advanced toward the in-coming party. He was satisfied that Bamali had reached his camp, and had started in with the girls and the baggage. Now that he was pretty certain that the revelations to be made by Wilson would free him from the charge of larceny and enable him to return to Chicago, he could not endure the thought of Susan's peril. Just now he wanted to get out of the jungle, with Susan and Florence, and return to civilization. Of course he wanted to find the diamonds, too, but that was now a secondary consideration.

"If I can get to the camp in time," said Florence, with a shiver of apprehension, "perhaps I can do something to assist the party."

"Then let us move at once," urged Bement. "I am sure that Susan and Clellie are with that party, and am not sure that the natives, without a white leader, will stand up in their defense."

"Our camp is around to the west," said the girl. "If Ginger is there I may be able to help the girls. At least I can secure help for father."

"Ginger?" questioned Bement.

"Yes, Ginger, the elephant."

"That's a fine idea!" cried Bement. "Of course you can divert the herd if you have a trained and intelligent elephant."

"If he is not afraid," added Florence.

They moved around the central elevation to the west, and before long came to a point from which the location of the camp they sought might be seen.

But the camp appeared to be deserted.

There were a few rough huts, such as natives build for protection from wild beasts and mosquitoes, but there were no signs of life, except that a movement in the jungle beyond denoted the presence of some living thing, man or beast, was not certain.

Florence paused with a look of terror on her face.

"Surely," said Bement, "there is some one about to explain the mystery."

Florence shook her head.

"If any remained after midnight, when neither of the leaders returned, they fled at the approach of the herd," she said.

"And Ginger?" asked Bement.

"He may be there. In fact, he would not leave without me unless compelled to by force. Ginger is a loyal old fellow."

Hastening forward, they came to the last canyon separating them from the site of the camp. Bement was so eager to reach the place toward which they were headed, and to begin active operations for the relief of the threatened party, that he would have plunged down the declivity without waiting for Florence, but she caught his arm and checked his advance. Then she pointed to a koppe of rocks in the canyon, up the wind.

There a splendid animal, tall, gaunt, with threads of black in his mane, arose and inspected the party calmly—a Nubian lion of large size!

It seemed that their progress to the site of the camp was to be obstructed by a new peril. And serious peril it was, for Bement was armed only with his revolvers, having left his heavy gun at the camp.

The lion stood for a moment with his great paws resting on a boulder. Then, thrusting out his ponderous jaws, he uttered a roar that went thundering down the canyon. There was nothing throaty about the roar of the magnificent creature. It was pure rumbling thunder.

Bement, in his impatience to reach means of rescuing the girls, was about to shoot at the lion with his revolver, but the girl checked the impulse.

"We must not lose our heads now," she said. "We must wait until the lion is close upon us before any shooting is done."

"But that will require time," urged Bement, "and will increase the risk to ourselves. Is there no way to get around him?"

"Not without making a long detour, and, then, we should probably have to fight him in the end."

"Then," said Bement, "I'm going to have it over with."

"With all my heart."

Bement advanced toward the lion, keeping rocks and undergrowth in front whenever possible. The lion held his pose for an instant and then ducked under the cover of a rock.

"He will spring from there," said the girl.

Treading softly, the two advanced to the first ridge of rocks. To pass these would be to come into the open, within reach of the lion if he took a running leap.

"We must await him here," declared Florence.

"Listen!" said Bement.

A mighty volume of sound came down with the wind. The elephants were gathering for the attack. The young man half-expected to hear the thunder of their tread when he held up his hand and pointed.

"Wait here!" he said. "And in the meantime, the girls will be trampled to death."

"We cannot help them by sacrificing our own lives," replied Florence, sadly. "To leave this shelter at this time means death."

"I can meet him in the open," replied Bement. "I am sure to put a bullet into his brain, or into his heart if he gives me a side shot."

The girl frowned and drew him back again.

"We must wait here," she said. "One shot might not answer out there. His mate is not far away."

Bement dropped on one knee and brought his revolver out. Every nerve tingled. With eyes and ears astrain, he looked and listened. At any moment the lion might venture forth from his hiding place.

Then the cry of a mate came from further up the canyon. The lion moved in his shelter and for an instant his massive head showed just outside the line of rock.

Bement fired and waited for some indication of the success of his effort. There came a roar, falling into a moan, and the splendid animal dropped outside the koppe. It was evident that he had been instantly killed. Later it was discovered that the bullet from the large .48 revolver had entered the right eye and penetrated to the base of the brain.

"That settles one obstruction!" cried Bement. "I'm sure he is dead!"

"Probably," replied the girl, coolly, "but the female is still to be reckoned with."

"That will be easy, if she shows herself."

The mate might be just beyond the ridge, for all the two knew, and there they kept their watch.

Presently there was a call from up the canyon, and a rattling of rocks. It was plain that the female was coming.

"She will come to the body of her mate," said Florence, "and then you must shoot. There may be others about. Sometimes lions follow the spoor of elephants for miles."

The girl was right in supposing that the female would come directly to the dead mate. She crept along in the shelter of the koppe behind which he had been killed and showed her head at his shoulder, snuffing softly, as if asking him to speak to her, and trying to turn the heavy limb with her paw.

It seemed a pity to kill the splendid creature, and Bement was even thinking of some way to avoid doing so, when she lifted her head and opened her jaws in a snarl of rage.

In another second she would have charged, but in that second Bement fired.

The crash of the explosion went echoing among the rocks, and the lioness leaped into the air. It seemed to the excited watchers that she went up ten feet. The beast landed on the north side of the koppe and came rolling, tumbling, clattering, clawing down.

She had been struck in the breast, but she got to her feet, ready for a spring, with incredible energy.

Bement fired again, but the bullet only grazed her neck. She tried to bite at the bleeding wound and came on with a rush.

Her flying form struck Bement on the chest and he went down, the heavy body passing over him, dropping to the earth, and whirling for another spring.

Florence, pistol in hand, sprang aside and fired as the lioness whirled. The shot did the beast no harm.

Bement was unconscious from the impact of the blow, and the lioness advanced upon him, her scarlet tongue showing between threatening fangs.

As she sprang again, Florence stepped into a position which seemed to warrant sure death. Revolver in hand, she stood in the very path of the wounded animal.

As the cruel mouth came to her, she thrust the muzzle of her revolver into it and fired. The force of the leap, exercised against the arm which had held the gun, turned the girl around, leaving the weapon

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in the lioness' mouth. The jaws tried to close upon this shining thing which had brought such a shiver of pain, but they would not respond to the will of the beast.

She whirled toward Florence, turned her face down in agony, and fell as she brushed against the girl's shoulder. In her struggles a long paw reached out toward Bement, still lying unconscious, and the girl, exerting all her remaining strength, endeavored to tear it away.

One swing with that paw, even though the lioness was in the throes of death, might wound the young man fatally or mark him for life.

There was little strength left in the animal, for Florence had the power to divert the blow. In a moment the beast lay still. The last shot had found a vital spot. Then the girl turned to Bement.

There was a long scratch on his forehead, from which blood was seeping, but there were no serious wounds. It seemed that the impact had knocked the breath out of his body. Florence lifted his head and in a moment he opened his eyes.

"I hope that I am not hurt," he said, trying to get to his feet.

"You are not injured seriously," was the reply.

Bement was on the point of asking what had followed his knockout, when the loud trumpeting of the elephants attracted the attention of both.

And following the trumpeting came the heavy tread, the stamping roar, of a charge.

## CHAPTER XVII.

## A NEW PARTY IN THE CRATER.

For a moment it seemed to the two waiting ones that the members of the approaching party must perish under the feet of the charging animals. There was no way to assist them. Only for the delay caused by the attack of the lions, something might have been attempted, at least, but now the watchers could only stand and tremble with the dread of what might happen.

The something that did happen seemed nothing less than a miracle. Bement regarded it in that light, at least.

A hundred yards from the advance guard of the party, the herd of trumpeting animals paused, as if at the command of a leader. This advance guard was composed of native carriers and trackers, and not a man of them all was advancing when the halt came. In fact, they were turning back, some running, some trying to conceal themselves in the most impossible places, such as tufts of grass and ranks of bushes only a few inches in height.

But when the elephants paused the natives gathered courage and faced to the front again, probably believing that the charging brutes were under the direction of a white traveler.

"Thank God!" cried Bement. "I can't understand what has taken place out there, but it seems to me that a miracle has taken place."

"You observe the large elephant at the front?" asked Florence.

"My eyes are not as good as yours," was the reply, "and the distance is great, but I think I see the beast you refer to."

"My!" exclaimed the girl, with a sad little smile. "You mustn't refer to Ginger as a beast! He is the most intelligent elephant on earth."

"Ginger?" repeated Bement. "What is Ginger doing out there in that wild herd?"

"I don't know," was the reply. "It is enough that he has saved the lives of the members of the party."

"Why, I thought you were going to the camp after him?"

"So I was, but it seems that he broke away when the others left, and joined forces with the wild herd."

"Will he remain with them?"

"That remains to be seen."

"He must have great powers of leadership," smiled Bement, "to control that wild band on such short notice."

"He probably opened action by fighting the leader of the herd," replied the girl. "In that case, he must have won. Ginger is a very strong animal, a very superior elephant in every way."

While they puzzled over what had already taken place, and tried to forecast what was about to take place, the herd filed off to the right, facing north, and made for the south bank of the Juba River. Bement could see the towering form of Ginger still in the lead.

"I am afraid you have lost your elephant," said the young man. "By the way, he added, "you must have been under the protection of Ginger the night we took your photograph near Lake Chioga?"

"Yes, indeed," smiled the girl. "I was waiting near your camp that night to warn you to get out of the country. I knew that the officers were coming."

"How did you know that?"

"We knew it first at Mruli. Both Kilrain, the president of the trust company, and the detective talked too much."

"And when you didn't find me, you wrote the letter and put it on the floating island? It was a sure way of attracting our attention to it, the sending off of rockets. The only wonder is that the rockets did not attract others."

"They did," said the girl, "and father and uncle accused me of having had something to do with the matter. I think that uncle would have murdered me if he had imagined I was warning you."

"Why do you think that?"

"Because, well, because your conviction—your capture even—would have made it appear that the real thief had been taken, and the lines at that time were closing down on him."

"Now, what do you mean by that?"

"You'll have to wait and hear the story from father."

The girl would say no more, but Bement was satisfied that he was now safe from pursuit, or, at least, from conviction and imprisonment.

Indeed, there was now no time for further conversation, for as the herd marched off the party came on again, and both Florence and Bement were anxious to meet the newcomers. They met Susas and Clellie in a few moments, and the meeting between brother and sister was a joyful one. Both girls, Susan and Clellie, looked astonished at the appearance of Florence. However, as the two shook hands with the latter they both broke into a laugh.

"And you must be the girl in white?" Susan said.

Florence looked down at her soiled and torn gown.

"It was white once," she replied, ruefully.

"I'm glad we've come up with you at last," said Clellie, "for Mr. Bement has talked of no one but you."

Bement blushed beneath his coat of tan and turned away.

"Why!" cried Clellie, in a moment, "you have been wounded, you are bleeding!"

"That is a scratch," was the reply. "A lioness playfully tumbled me over, and Miss Wilson shot him. The girl in white appeared none too soon, for she saved my life."

Florence was intently watching the herd, disporting in the waters of the river.

"Perhaps," said Bamali, coming up from the advance, "you can tell me why the elephants turned away when they came to us?"

The girls looked the question the native had asked. Heretofore they had been too overjoyed at the meeting, too pleased with the final discovery of the girl in white, to give much thought to the miracle which had preserved their lives.

"Miss Wilson can tell you," replied Bement.

Then the girl explained that the leader of the herd was a pet elephant of her own, which, deserted by his keepers, had broken loose during the night.

"We have often heard of you and your elephants, we of the jungle," said Bamali, with a bow. "And your father is a mighty man with the wild animals. I have traveled with him."

"I'm afraid we are forgetting poor papa," said the girl. "He is wounded, and has only the care of a native, so we must return to him."

"By a wild animal?" asked Bamali.

Bement nodded, and told in brief the incidents of the night.

Bamali looked anxious. He cast his eyes toward the rim of the crater, then pointed with one sinewy hand.

"A party went in there early this morning," he said. "One of my scouts saw the carriers working over the rim, away to the south."

"And father is there, wounded unto death!" cried Florence.

There was silence for a moment, and then Bement asked:

"What is to be done?"

"What party is it?" asked Susan and Clellie in a breath, thinking, doubtless of the menace to Bement in the appearance of a party which might contain an officer.

"It is not the party composed of the carriers and trackers of Kalkenbrenner, Morris, and Kilrain," said Bamali. "I know their people well. These natives seem to belong to a tribe from the desert."

"I would like to know how many parties are in here," said Susie.

"We shall know in time," replied Bamali. "They are doubtless after diamonds. The diamond is a strong lure."

"And is it a certainty that there are diamonds there?" asked Clellie. "Father always said there were millions of dollars' worth of gems in there. Poor father! I have about given up all hope of ever seeing him again!"

"I am sure that he is alive and well—somewhere," said Bamali. "If I thought him dead, I should return at once."

"But it would be a miracle if he survived the charge of the hippo," urged the girl, "and, then, he would never remain away from us so long."

"The future will solve the problem," was the reply.

The attention of the party was now attracted to the herd of elephants, still sporting in the waters of the river. There was a heavy trumpeting, and then Ginger detached himself from the heaving group which surrounded him and faced toward the spot where his mistress was standing.

"He is returning, voluntarily returning!" said the girl, pleased beyond all measure at the prospect of having her very useful pet again.

"You must have him well trained," said Bement.

"Wait!" cried Florence. "I have an idea that he is not acting entirely on his own notion. Watch him!"

The big elephant seemed trying to regain the herd of rovers. He would turn to the right, move in a quarter circle, and be forced back in the direction of the party on the hill. Then he would flap his huge ears, move his tail angrily, and wheel to the left, only to be turned back again by some unknown force.

"Some one is astride of his neck!" said Bement, presently.

"Then it must be a very small person," said Clellie.

"Indeed it is!" smiled Florence, almost jumping up and down in her joy. "It is Demon! Surely it is Demon come back!"

"Who is Demon?" asked Bement.

"A dwarf native," was the reply. "A cunning man, but ever so small, not larger than an ape! It is no wonder that he was not seen when he halted the charge!"

"When I get back to Chicago," said Bement, "I'm going to put this whole business into a comic opera. What do you think of such goings-on in the heart of the Dark Continent?"

"I think," replied Bamali, "that there will be more serious happenings soon, for I do not mean to leave the strangers in peaceful possession of the crater and what it contains."

This last with a look at Bement which commanded silence regarding the diamond find.

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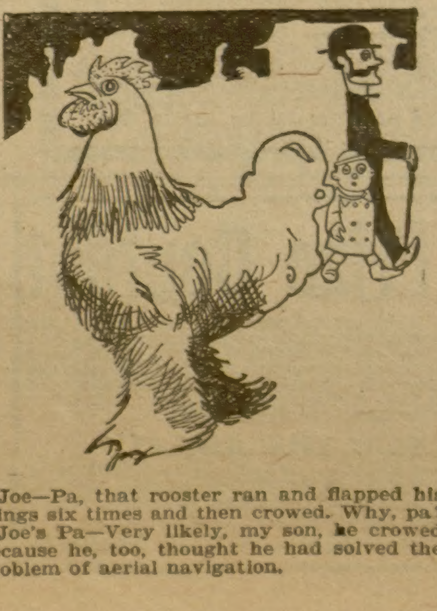

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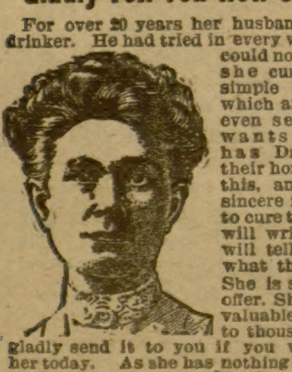

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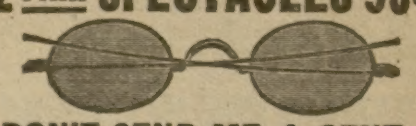

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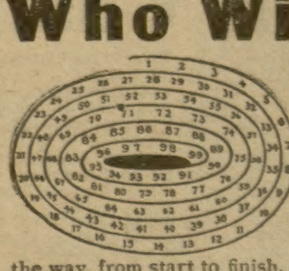

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Boys AND Girls Corner

# Canoemates in Canada;

## Or, THREE CHUMS AFLOAT

### By Archie McGregor

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Begun in No. 48, November 27. Subscriptions can begin with that issue, or back copies can be obtained from news stands, or our agents, or by mail from office of publication.

### CHAPTER VI.

### THE TIMBER-CRUISER.

NEITHER of the boys whom Owen addressed showed any particular signs of alarm at his rather startling words, though Cuthbert quietly reached out and drew his faithful ally, the little Marlin repeater, somewhat closer, as though he felt safer thus; and Eli looked up to where the shotgun, which was his especial charge, leaned against an adjacent tree, within easy reach.

Both of them had been around considerable, and could not be considered green in the ways of the woods; and it is habit as well as disposition that makes men cool in the face of peril.

Plainly now the footfalls could be heard, for evidently the party appraching did not want to arouse suspicion on the part of the campers, and be met by a hostile shot.

His figure loomed up presently in the semi-gloom beyond the range of the firelight, and Cuthbert, when he first saw the tall, bulky form of the pilgrim, was of the opinion that no word could do the newcomer better justice than just the expression "loomed," for he was pretty much of a giant.

He was roughly dressed for the work of the woods, and carried a rifle of necessity, for a man would be several sorts of a fool who wandered about these wild parts without that mainstay to back him up, and lacking which he must of necessity starve in the midst of plenty.

Cuthbert looked keenly at the fellow's face, being, as has been said before, something of a reader of character.

He instantly decided that he did not fancy the man—not that he was on the surface other than a rough woods rover, with a laugh like the roar of a bull alligator, and a heartiness that seemed genuine enough; but something about his eyes caused the explorer to believe him double-faced.

Eli could not see deep enough for that, and was ready to take the fellow for just what he appeared, a big, rough-and-ready woodsman, full of coarse jokes, perhaps, but honest withal, a diamond that had never been chipped.

"Wall, bless my soul if it ain't three boys in camp here! Who'd a suspected sich a thing, away up in this kentry, too. Lots o' pluck to come so fur, fellers, how's the huntin' now, and I hopes as how ye ain't settin' up in business as rivals ter me, ha! ha! In course I seen yer blaze jest a ways back, an' thinks I, what's the use in bunkin' alone ternight, Stackpole, yer ole timber-cruiser, when thar's companionable chaps near by who won't object p'raps ter sharin' ther fire with ye? So I toddled along a little further, an' here I be. Jest say as I'm welcome, an' let me enjoy the hospertality o' the occasion. Thunder! but the blaze is mighty fine tonight, fellers. Guess it won't be far from frost by mornin' the way it is now. Hello! that you, Owen—well, who'd a thought I'd run acrost ye here; ain't set eyes on ye this long spell."

Owen made no reply, but there was a little curl to his upper lip that Cuthbert noticed, and he knew that the young Canadian held no very good opinion of the giant timber-cruiser.

The name Stackpole was not entirely unknown to Cuthbert, since it had been mentioned by several people when speaking of the Far Northwest and those who were to be met with there—and if his recollection were correct he was of the impression that the same Stackpole had been held up as an example of a somewhat lawless character, who made a pretense of cruising about looking for valuable timber in places where the lumbermen, soon to come, could float the logs down a river to a market; but who was suspected of other practices of a less honest character.

At any rate Cuthbert scented trouble of some sort, and was greatly disgusted in that the other had discovered their camp, as he had declared, by accident, for as yet there was no reason to suspect he had any design in joining them.

He hardly knew what to do in the matter, for it would seem to be the height of foolishness to warn Stackpole off, and refuse him the little favor he asked, of spending the night by their fire, to enjoy their company—people who roam the woods have peculiar ideas of hospitality, and it is a serious infraction of the unwritten rules to deny a wanderer the privilege of the camp for a night.

Surely they could stand his unwelcome presence for that short time; and if they maintained their usual custom of standing watch-and-watch alike, there would seem to be little chance of his doing them an evil turn.

Accordingly Cuthbert allowed his face to appear pleasant, as though he might even be delighted to have this wandering timber spy with them for a space, to enliven things a bit.

"Sit down and make yourself quite at home. You're right, it is getting sharp and I wouldn't be at all surprised to see signs of frost, the first of the season, in the morning. We're up here knocking about a little, partly to hunt, but mostly because I've a penchant, that is, a weakness for exploring out-of-the-way places. Stackpole, did you say your name was—well, mine's Cuthbert Reynolds, this is my friend Eli Perkins, and, you seem to know Owen, so I won't try to introduce him. Have you had supper—if not there's something in the pot that wouldn't taste bad if warmed up a bit?"

That was the way Cuthbert spoke, for he was naturally genial and generous, ready to divide anything he had with one in distress; only in this case he felt that it was along the line of casting pearls before swine, for that ugly little gleam in the corner of Stackpole's shifty eye warned him against trusting the fellow too far.

"That sounds good, an' I'm goin' ter take ye up on the proposition, young feller. I ain't had ary bite since noon, an' then 'twas a snack only. Coffee—why, I've plumb forgot how she tastes, fact, it's been so long since I had a cup. An' stew, my, that smells prime. Say, it was a mighty lucky streak that made me head along the river here, headin' fur the post. Thought I'd keep right along till I got thar, but 'twas tryin' business, an' I'd jest determined ter bunk down till mornin' when I ketched a glimpse o' this yer fire. Guess my old luck ain't petered out yit."

He was evidently something of a talker, and liked to hear the sound of his own voice; but Cuthbert was of the opinion that the presence of Owen had rather upset the big chap, and that some of this patter was intended to hide his confusion, and allow him to figure out his standing there.

The mystery surrounding Owen seemed to be growing deeper all the while, and the more these peculiar things came about the greater the desire on Cuthbert's part to help the Canadian lad by all means in his power.

He awaited his chance to see the other alone, so that he might ask a few pertinent questions concerning Stackpole.

This came in a little while, when, the coffee and stew having been warmed, the giant timber-cruiser was busily employed in disposing of the same.

Owen was down by the river's edge, ap-

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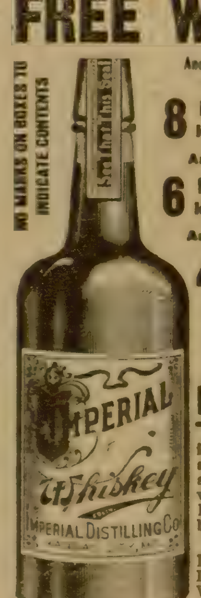

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parently looking after the two boats, so they would be safe for the night—he never missed an opportunity to handle the wonderful cedar canoe, running his hands over its smooth sides, and admiring its beautiful lines, so that this was not a peculiar occupation for him.

Nevertheless, Cuthbert was rather inclined to believe that Owen wanted him to saunter over that way, in order that he might say something he could not well communicate in the presence of the unwelcome guest.

So he got up, busied himself with a few things for a minute or two, and then walked in the direction of the boats, conscious at the same time that Stackpole had his shrewd eyes fastened upon him; and he could imagine the sneer upon the bearded face of the woodsman, betraying how readily he saw through the little game.

"I imagine you know what sort of fellow he is, Owen. Now, I don't just fancy his looks, and even if you weren't here to tell me about him I'd keep an eye on Mr. Stackpole during his stay in camp," was what Cuthbert said in a low tone, as he sat down on the upturned cedar boat alongside his friend.

"Well, that's the whole thing in a nutshell—it's a wise thing to keep watch of that man when he's near anything valuable, for he's got a reputation for being light-fingered, and I know he's been accused of lots of mean things up in this country. Most men are afraid of him, for he can be an ugly customer in a scrap, and under that jolly laugh he has the temper of a devil. And to tell you the truth, he doesn't like me worth a cent. There's a story connected with it which I'll be glad to tell you at the first chance, that is if you care to hear anything concerning my wretched and unhappy past. I think we'd better act as if we didn't suspect anything, only let him see we are handy with our weapons, and keep watch here. Perhaps he'll go away in the morning, but I don't believe that he's heading for the post, because there's been bad blood between him and the old factor for a long while; and I guess Mr. Gregory is the only man in all these parts Stackpole really has respect for."

All of this Owen muttered into the ear of his comrade, meanwhile keeping his eyes fastened upon the burly figure squatted in the camp beside the genial fire, and noting how often Stackpole's glance wandered suspiciously toward them, as if the fellow wondered what he, Owen, might be telling the young fellow, whom he had already decided, if he did not know it before, to be the ruling spirit of the expedition, and who evidently held the purse, a very important consideration in the mind of a man like the said Stackpole.

"Yes, when you get good and ready to tell me I'd consider it a privilege to know something more of your life here, old chap; and if anything I can do will be of benefit, you understand that you're as welcome to it as the sunlight after a week of rain," pursued Cuthbert; at which the other, overcome with emotion (for he had led a lonely life and never knew what it was to have the counsel of a genuine friend) and unable to express his feelings in words, simply allowed his hand to creep along the keel of the cedar canoe until it met that of the generous-hearted Cuthbert, when his fingers were intertwined with those of his new chum; nor were these latter loth to meet him half-way.

There was a whole world of words in that eloquent handgrip, for soul spoke to soul; and the communion of interests that had been slowly drawing them together ever since their strange meeting was cemented then and there.

They busied themselves around the boats for a short time, more to make it appear that they had really sought the spot with the intention of fixing things cozily for the night than because there was need of their labor; and during the minutes that elapsed Cuthbert managed to ask numerous questions about Stackpole, for when he learned from Owen that in times past this fellow and the halfbreed Dubois, from whom he had secured the unreliable chart, had been boon companions, a disturbing thought was born in his mind that possibly there might have been more of design than accident in the coming of the timber-cruiser on this night.

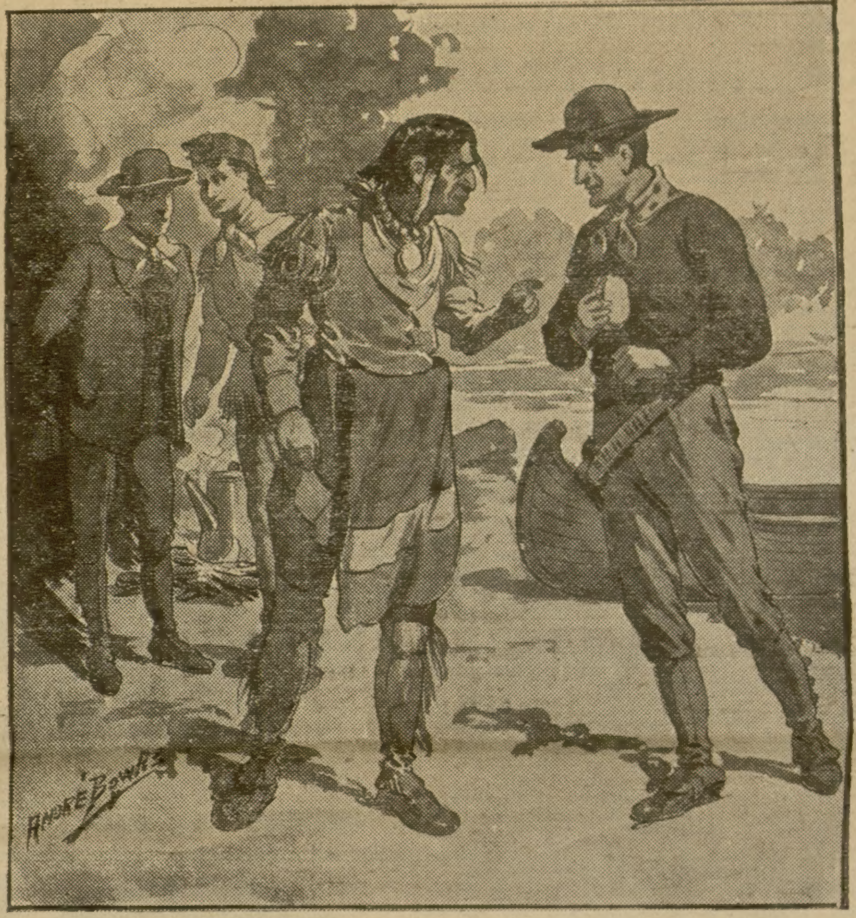
The peace and charm that had up to this period marked the stay of himself and honest Eli in the wilderness seemed in a fair way to be dissipated; and who could say what sort of storm and stress lay before them—for one thing, he was glad that Owen had crossed his path, nor did he mean that the other should ever go out of his life again—come what would, he was bound to look forward to a future shared in common by both, whether in American wilds or some far-distant country where wonderful things were awaiting discovery.

## CHAPTER VII.

## OWL AND TIMBER WOLF.

When the two friends returned to the fire Stackpole was taking his ease and smoking furiously, Eli having possibly supplied him with tobacco of a brand far beyond any to which he may have been accustomed in his wanderings.

Evidently, no matter what his suspicions may have been, the gaunt timber nomad was resolved to seem quite at his ease; indeed, his was a nature not easily disturbed by possible trouble—he found the vicinity of the fire comfortable, and did not mean to forsake it in a hurry unless there was urgent reason for decamping.



**"How!" exclaimed the copper-colored intruder.**

Eli, in his wild life among the lumberjacks, had met with too many characters just like Stackpole, not to size the fellow up for just what he must be; and while he carried on in a seemingly friendly way, he was watching the other, with the idea of guessing his business in this particular region; for he judged that Stackpole seldom made a move without some suspicious object back of it.

When a lad is thrown upon his own resources at a very early age he soon learns to analyze people and their motives in a manner equal to a Sherlock Holmes, and Eli had always delighted in trying to read the various types to be met with in the wilderness.

Cuthbert was uneasy.

The presence of this hulking rover took away from all the pleasure of the camp, and he was provoked to think they should be compelled to entertain one who was not only a stranger but possessed of an unsavory reputation.

Still, he had been in the woods enough to be aware that there is an unwritten law governing hospitality around the campfire; and no matter how unpleasant the presence of this timber-cruiser might be to him, he did not wish to appear in the light of a boor.

They were three to one, and having been forewarned they could keep a jealous eye on the said unwelcome guest so long as he remained; but Cuthbert vowed to himself that with the break of day, and the morning meal over, their paths must lie in opposite directions.

Stackpole was no fool, and it did not take him long to discover that each of the three lads kept his gun within reach of his hand all the time; which fact announced as plain as words could have done that they entertained suspicions concerning him, and did not mean to be caught napping in case he tried to make trouble of any sort.

Now, while Stackpole was a fellow equal to two if not three of the boys, with regard to physical abilities, death and the possession of firearms levels all such distinctions, and a bit of lead would sting just as much from one of their guns as if it had come from the weapon of a six-footer; hence, he made up his mind to walk a straight line while among the possessors of all this hardware.

His avaricious eyes wandered frequently toward the splendid Marlin repeater owned by Cuthbert, and the fact was very evident that he envied him the possession of such a dandy gun, compared with which his battered Winchester looked like "six cents," as Eli remarked to himself when he correctly gauged the meaning of those sly glances.

"He'll steal it if he can, the skunk," muttered the young logger, shaking his head in his pet peculiar manner, which he always did when angered or puzzled.

And then and there Eli determined that he would not allow himself a wink of sleep that whole night; and that if Stackpole attempted any "funny business" he would round him up with a sharp turn.

They talked of many things while sitting there around the campfire, and the man managed to make himself fairly agreeable; for he certainly was mighty well posted in everything connected with the country Cuthbert, in his enthusiastic simplicity had come so far to explore; and had he been built upon a different plan, Stackpole might have proven a valuable man to tote along—he had penetrated further in the direction of Hudson Bay and the Arctic shores

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beyond than any other man in the Northwest Territory, and proved this by describing many of the things encountered by a well known explorer with whose work Cuthbert was quite familiar, and whose sole companion Stackpole claimed to have been.

There is something more than mere knowledge to be desired in a companion on a long tramp, and this is reliance in his fidelity, cheerful disposition, and readiness to shoulder at least half of the labor—without these qualities in a campmate much of the pleasure is missing.

Finally the boys began to find themselves yawning, for the day's toil had been severe, with a strong current in the river to buck against, and they had been up since peep of day.

So they began to make preparations for sleeping.

The giant timber-cruiser watched them get their sleeping-bags ready, that is, Cuthbert and Eli, with more or less curiosity, for evidently he knew little or nothing about such Arctic necessities, even though he had accompanied an explorer for many hundred miles into the great unmapped region beyond Hudson Bay—at least he claimed to have done so.

Perhaps there was also a bit of envy in the looks he bent upon these evidences of comfort, for he could appreciate the value of such contrivances during a Northern winter, especially to a man whose business was apt to take him outdoors, regardless of the weather.

He had an apology for a blanket in his pack, and this he proceeded to spread upon the ground, selecting a spot close to the fire, where he could toast his feet while he slumbered, a favorite attitude with such nomads, as our young friends all knew.

Owen, of course, had his third of the tent, but it had been already arranged between the trio that all through the night one of them should stand guard, not because there appeared to be impending danger from without, but on account of the unwelcome guest they entertained at their fire.

Not one of them grumbled, being built in a manner to meet such emergencies cheerfully, and wrestle with difficulties in the same spirit as they would accept favors, a splendid combination in woods chums.

No doubt Stackpole noticed that Owen, having made his bed ready, showed no disposition to occupy the same; but if he understood just why, he at least made no comment, in which he showed his good sense.

He turned in "all standing," simply lying down, rolling himself up in his faded blanket, and with his pack-bag for a pillow, losing himself to the world, so far as the boys could tell; though they noticed that he had pulled his slouch hat so far down over his face that it was utterly impossible to see whether his keen eyes were closed or watching every movement of his entertainers.

Inside the tent our friends found a chance to confer, and thus a plan of campaign for the night was laid down.

Then Cuthbert and Eli crawled into their sleeping-bags, for the night was inclined to be frosty, and there is a world of comfort in these modern contrivances, under such conditions; while Owen walked down to the canoes, and with an arm thrown caressingly across the keel of the precious cedar craft began his long and lonely vigil.

He thought nothing of such a little hardship, having been accustomed to the vicissitudes of the woods from childhood—to him the various sounds of the wilderness, after nightfall had come, were as familiar as the cackling of hens to a farmer's lad, and what was more to the point he read these signs so well that they one and all possessed a significance far beyond any surface indications.

But these forests of the Silent Land bear little comparison with the depths of a tropical jungle, or the dense growth of an African wilderness where a multitude of animals make the air vibrate with their roaring during the entire period of darkness.

Sometimes in the daytime not a sound can be heard save the moaning of the wind among the tops of the pines, or the gurgle of some meandering stream, all around being absolute silence, deep and profound.

At night it is not quite so bad, for then the hooting of a vagrant owl, or it may be the distant howl of a prowling timber wolf, that gray skulker of the pine lands, is apt to break the monotony; but even in the midst of summer there is lacking the hum of insects and the bustle of woods life—at best one hears the weird call of the whip-poor-will, called by the Indians, the "wish-a-wish," or if near a marsh the croaking of gigantic bullfrogs.

Owen apparently had many things to engage his thoughts as he kept watch and ward over the camp of his new-found friends; and judging from his repeated sighs his self-communion was hardly of a cheerful character, for several times the boy gritted his teeth savagely, and clinched his fist as though rebelling against some decree of fate that had temporarily upset his calculations.

Once a name escaped his lips, and it was that of the old factor in charge of the Hudson Bay trading post further up the river; and almost in the same breath he murmured the word "mother," tenderly, as though his thoughts had flown backward to happy scenes so greatly in contrast with his present forlorn conditions.

Nevertheless, Owen did not forget why he was on guard, not for a minute.

He had so placed himself when leaning his back against that adored cedar boat that he could keep watch over the camp, and particularly that portion of it where Stackpole's elongated frame, rolled up like a mummy in his blanket, was to be seen.

So often did the eyes of the lad fall upon the recumbent timber-cruiser that the other could not have moved without attracting his notice.

Stackpole was apparently sleeping like a log, for ever and anon his stertorian breathing arose into something approaching a snore, that sounded tremulously, like a mysterious note from a harsh Eolian harp set in the wind.

Possibly, upon noting that Owen was to have the first watch the shrewd chap had made up his mind there would be nothing doing thus early in the night, his chances being better later on when the "greenhorn, as he erroneously denominated Cuthbert on account of his fine name and genteel appearance, had charge.

Thus time crept along, midnight came and went, with young Dugdale still holding the fort, as if he intended remaining there until dawn.

Once only did he detect a movement on the part of the suspicious party; and then Stackpole twisted about as though desirous of assuming a new position, and at the same time he raised his head and took a sweeping glance around, just as any woodsman might during the night, a habit born of eternal watchfulness; yet under the circumstances it was more or less suspicious to see how the fellow completed his hasty survey by a quick look in the direction of the boats, as if quite conscious of the fact that Owen was still there on guard.

He immediately dropped back, and presently was heard the same pulsating sound of asthmatic breathing, sometimes ending in a snort—if Stackpole was still awake and pretending sleep he knew how to imitate the real article right well, Owen thought, shaking his head dubiously.

If the Canadian lad thought to usurp the privilege of the others in extending his watch, he counted without his host, for Cuthbert came crawling out of the tent shortly after the time he had set.

Next week's Ledger will contain further chapters of this story of strange and wild boyhood adventures. You will miss a great treat if you do not read it to the end. We will give you constantly the very best stories of entertainment that money will buy, so send in your subscription and take the Ledger regularly, if you are not doing so. You will not regret it.

## The Mysterious Cousin.

(Continued from page five.)

Huddlestone was a villain and he would expose him at the first good opportunity. He had been waiting on Minwaring, he would wait no longer. All his personal affairs must be held in abeyance till the mystery surrounding the death of Gideon Lake was fully revealed. In his own mind there rested no doubt, but it required proof ere the world and a court jury substantiated his own conviction. To dig up this proof was now the land-cruiser's sole object.

The horseman was nearing the vicinity of Washtenong village when a voice hailed him from the street. It proved to be Timothy Huddlestone, who came from a house near the road. He held a book under his arm, and walked with the teetering gait of an old man.

"I've been wanting to see you, Volney," said the old money-lender in a wheedling voice. "I understand that you are interested in the business affairs of the late Gideon Lake?"

"I was Mr. Lake's friend."

"Oh, yes, we all know that. The affairs of the estate are in bad shape. I thought perhaps you might have a little money to invest in straightening out affairs. You see, I have been good to the Lakes, and now I find that I am likely to be paid for my kindness by being swindled. You——"

"Swindled!"

The voice of Gregerson cut in like the snarl of an angry bear.

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"Oh, oh, I beg your pardon," stammered the old man, recoiling from the fierce glare of the horseman's eyes. "I meant no harm. Of course if you don't care to save the women folks from being turned out, all right."

"You doddering old scoundrel!" exclaimed Gregerson as the old money shark made off up the road. "I'd like to strangle you and all your ilk!"

Clapping heels to his horse Gregerson galloped on, disappearing around a bend in the road.

"He, he!" chuckled old Timothy. "So you feel like choking me, eh? Well, now, you do feel chipper and no mistake. You must think I am a philanthropist to give up a small fortune to a child of old Gid Lake's. Pah! It's my interest I want. They can't pay that so I shall foreclose and take everything.

"Donald is doing splendidly now, although he balked at the start. He sees it in the same light as his old uncle now. He will marry Letty Lake and make everything secure. That is the easiest as well as the safest way out of the whole blamed mess. The girl don't seem to be in a hurry to tie up with that land-cruiser, and her hesitancy has given Don his chance."

The old man had not gone far ere he met a vehicle bearing a young woman.

"Ah-h-h, Miss Iderman, how fortunate. I was wanting to see a friend. Would you mind my riding with you a ways. I want to talk——"

"Not tonight, Timmy," and the girl cut her horse with her whip and dashed on, almost overturning the old man, who had got very close to the side of the buggy. He pivoted about on one foot and his eyes were dust-filled as Miss Iderman's vehicle whirled swiftly on its way.

"Blame take the girl anyhow," grumbled Tim. "She's got the devil in her bigger'n a woodchuck—and yet I like her after all."

Gregerson was soon far on his journey toward Gardenfield. Heaven's lamps came out, one by one, dotting the sky like electric lights in a great city. The land-cruiser was studying the situation with hot heart and blazing eyes. His hatred was turned upon the Huddlestones twain. A more thorough set of scoundrels did not live in his estimation. Volney thought of the fair Californian who had so recently come to the home of the Lakes. To him she was a revelation. Whether the influence she exerted over him was of a hypnotic nature he could not tell, he only knew that he was growing to like Florence Iderman. In a camaraderie way of course, he assured himself. Little Lettice was a weakling in comparison to her Western cousin, and the two were no more alike than night and day.

He was seeing less of his sweetheart as the days passed. She seemed almost inaccessible. Always a headache or similar indisposition kept her from meeting him, while Florence was ever in evidence, excusing her cousin, doing all in her power to entertain her friends.

Somehow the lack of Lettice's presence was atoned for in a great measure by her fair relative, and it may not be wondered at that the latter occupied fully as much of the young man's thoughts as did the other.

In some respects Florence had the advantage of her cousin. She was taller, more majestic in carriage, her dark olive skin and luminous black eyes making her a dangerous rival in the field of love.

Gregerson started from a self-communion that was unpleasant. The distant bark of of a dog echoed through the night. He realized for the first time that darkness surrounded him; great trees fluffed their foliage in a grand and illimitable curtain overhead. Darkness hung like a great, black cloak over all—the silence of the great woods was oppressive.

The man shook himself, and thrilled throughout his body with an undeniable chill, although the air was free from dampness, and it was not distinctly cold.

"I am growing nervous," muttered the land-cruiser disgustedly.

His hand tightened the rein and his horse responded by breaking into a swift trot. Presently the country became broken, in places ridged with gulleys—the most dismal part of the road to Gardenfield.

Volney drew rein suddenly.

He had heard a sound, and down toward the mouth of a deep indention there glimmered the tiniest speck of light, perhaps a firefly on its evening rounds. But no, it flickered yet did not die out. Some human hand was, he felt sure, attached to the moving spark of fire.

The horseman was interested. He had come for the purpose of investigation. Here was something interesting, promising a very strenuous adventure. Gregerson slipped from the saddle, led his beast into a thicket, tied him to a sapling, then pushed forward to investigate.

The continuation of this thrilling story will be found in the Ledger issue of next week. If you are not a regular subscriber to the Ledger we would like to have your name on our list. The Ledger is only $1.00 per year; it is worth many times that amount. Send in your subscription, for many great stories that you cannot afford to miss will appear during the coming months.

### THE CHAMPION LIAR.

Here lies an editor,
  Snooks if you will;
In mercy, kind Providence,
  Let him be still.

He lied for his living,
  So he lived while he lied;
When he could not lie longer
  He lay down and died.

### Thrifty.

She crept up on his knee and peeped over the sporting page. "Jack," she whispered, confidentially, "if you'll just let me have $6 more to buy that beautiful fall hat I saw in the store today I'll just show you how economical I can be."

"And what will you do, dear?" inquired hubby curiously.

"Why, I'll take all the flowers off of my summer peach-basket hat and trim it with ribbons and you won't have to spend a cent for a new waste basket. Won't that be a saving?"

## A Loveless Bridal.

(Continued from page three.)

The door opened and closed on the man like the portals of doom.

Marcella remained in the middle of the room a few moments, and then, as her senses reeled, she staggered toward the bed and threw herself upon it.

A thousand thoughts seemed to clash in brain.

Where was Dularia, her maid? Where was there a friend to rescue her from this new and terrible danger? After all, why had she fled from the house in Lovelit place? Was it to perish in the trap into which she had fallen, her fate unknown to the world and her loveless altar to become the secret of her aunt, Doctor Judas, Ramon and one or two others?

At length, fortunately for her, she passed into a state of unconsciousness.

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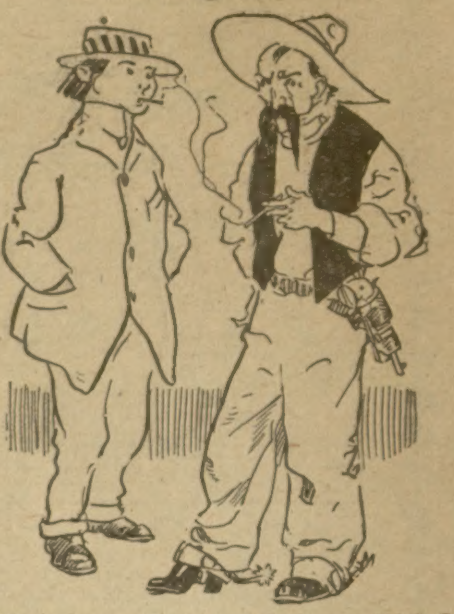
### Objects in Life.

"Yes," said the near millionaire, "I have two objects in life."

"What are they?" asked the dense party.

"One is to become rich, and the other is to become richer," was the reply.

### Fitting Job.



Mr. Maurice East—And don't you think I could get a job as cowboy?

Bad Lands Bill—Naw, ye ought to be able to get a job as milkmaid, though.

Get busy early in giving first aid to Santa Claus.

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**HEART WEAKNESS**—Fluttering, Skipping, Palpitation, Pain in Heart, Side or Shoulder Blade, Short Breath, Weak, Sinking, Cold or Dizzy Spells, Swelling, Rheumatism, Throbbing in Excitement or Exertion.

**CATARRH**—Hawking, Spitting, Nose Running Watery or Yellowish Matter or Stopped Up, Sneezing, Dull Headache, Coughing, Deafness; Pains in Kidneys, Bladder, Lungs, Stomach or Bowels may be Catarrh.

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For Youthful Eyes

## THE YOUNGEST BOY.

He's dreaming of a hobbyhorse
And lots of pretty toys;
He's dreaming of tin trumpets and
All things that make a noise.
He's dreaming of a soldier cap,
And of a tenor drum—
And smiling while he's waiting
For Santa Claus to come.

He's dreaming of the reindeer
That haul the Christmas sleigh;
He's dreaming of the candles
That light the Christmas way.
He's dreaming of the sleighbells
That ring adown the road,
And smiling while he's dreaming
Of Santa and his load.

Dream on, O little brother;
And wake on Christmas morn
To find the horse and helmet,
The toys and noisy horn.
Smile on amidst your dreaming,
And may God grant to you
A happy Christmas morning
With all your dreams come true.

## The Hawk and the Nightingale.

A Hawk, oppressed by hunger, and who had passed the day without eating, heard toward evening a nightingale singing among the branches of a tree.

"Good," said the bird of prey. "Here is a musician which makes my ears rejoice, but my stomach is in need of something else; this little musician should make a dainty morsel."

Immediately he came pouncing upon the nightingale and carried it away.

"Heaven bless me!" cried the herald of spring. "You certainly won't be so barbarous as to kill me. I am not big enough to make a meal for you; then why should you put me to death? I have never done you any harm. Won't you listen to a little song?"

"A song! You are jesting. That doesn't make a meal for a hawk. I don't care for your music. A hungry belly has no ears; so, my little musician, you must die."

What is necessary should be preferred to what is merely for curiosity, ornament or pleasure.

## In Germany.

It wouldn't seem a bit like Christmas to German children if they didn't have a Christmas tree, and they say there that the presents are hung on the tree by the Christ-Child, who comes flying through the air on golden wings during the night.

When He comes to the houses where there is a Christmas tree, He stops and hangs all kinds of gifts on it for the good children.

But in one part of Germany they say that our "Santa Claus" is really an angel who goes from house to house, dressed in rags, and carrying a bag on his back. He knocks loudly and asks: "Are the children good?" If he hears mother and father say "yes," he leaves all sorts of nice presents; but if he hears "no," he leaves a stick!

## WYNKEN, BLYNKEN AND NOD.

By Eugene Field.

Wynken, Blynken, and Nod one night
Sailed off in a wooden shoe—
Sailed on a river of crystal light,
Into a sea of dew.
"Where are you going, and what do you wish?"
The old moon asked the three.
"We have come to fish for the herring fish
That live in this beautiful sea;
Nets of silver and gold have we!"
Said Wynken,
Blynken,
and Nod.

The old moon laughed and sang a song,
As they rocked in the wooden shoe,
And the wind that sped them all night long
Ruffled the waves of dew.
The little stars were the herring fish
That lived in that beautiful sea—
"Now cast your nets wherever you wish—
Never afraid are we;"
So cried the stars to the fisherman three:
Wynken,
Blynken,
and Nod.

All night long their nets they threw
To the stars in the twinking foam—
Then down from the skies came the wooden shoe,
Bringing the fishermen home;
'Twas all so pretty a sail it seemed
As if it could not be,
And some folks thought 'twas a dream they dreamed
Of sailing that beautiful sea—
But I shall name you the fishermen three:
Wynken,
Blynken,
and Nod.

Wynken and Blynken are two little eyes,
And Nod is a little head,
And the wooden shoe that sailed the skies
Is a wee one's trundle bed.
So shut your eyes while mother sings
Of wonderful sights that be,
And you shall see the beautiful things
As you rock in the misty sea
Where the old shoe rocked the fishermen three:
Wynken,
Blynken,
and Nod.

## About Nutmegs.

Nutmegs—those hard marbles of spice so essential to the artist in pastry—grow on trees resembling the tree of the pear. These trees reach a height of about twenty feet. Like the orange tree, they have blossoms and ripe fruit on them at the same time and at all seasons of the year, for they are found only in tropical countries. The nutmeg flower is small and fragrant, resembling closely the lily of the valley. The nutmeg itself is a seed, and mace, another common spice, is the thin covering of the seed. The entire fruit is about the size of a peach. When it ripens it splits open and discloses the little nut inside.

The nutmeg tree is native to Asia and the tropical parts of America. Here it will bear fruit for seventy or eighty years. The island of Jamacia produces excellent nutmeg trees, there being a record of one that produced over 4,000 nutmegs each year.

When the Dutch owned Jamaica and other islands near it they "cornered" the nutmeg trade by overpowering rival dealers and burning their trees. The Dutch traders became so avaricious that they were not content with having control of the trade, but were determined to keep the price high, although the supply was abundant. So they at one time burned three piles of these nuts, and each pile, it is related, was larger than a two-story house. But they were outwitted by the nutmeg pigeon, a bird which is found on all these islands, and is thus named because it feeds on the spicy nuts. The pigeons carried the nutmegs in their beaks through all the surrounding country. In time the seeds they dropped in their flight sprouted, grew and bore fruit, and the world, not the selfish Dutch trust, got the benefit.

## Maxims to Guide the Young.

Keep good company or none. Never be idle. If your hands cannot be usefully employed, attend to the cultivation of your mind.

Always speak the truth. Make few promises. Live up to your engagements. When you speak to a person, look him in the face.

Good company and good conversation are the very sinews of virtue. Good character is above all things else. Never listen to loose or idle conversation. You had better be poisoned in your blood than in your principles.

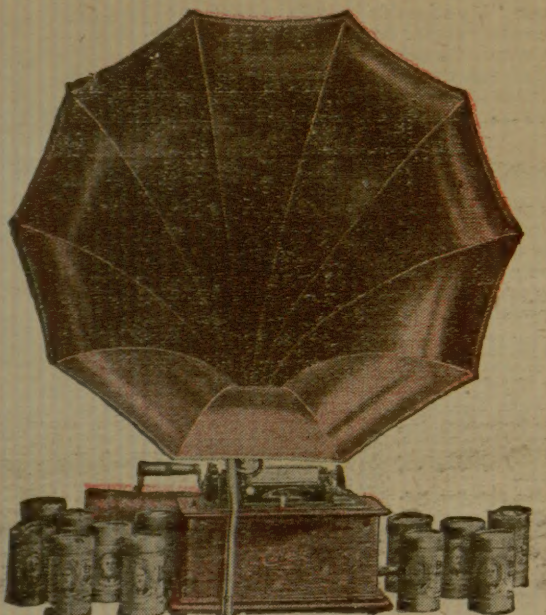
Your character cannot be essentially injured except by your own acts. If any one should speak evil of you, let your life be so virtuous that none will believe him.

## THE STOLEN CUSTARD.

In haste I bore the tidings:
"My darling, I'm afraid
Your pussy cat has stolen
The custard that you made."

I feared a burst of weeping,
But saw, with glad surprise,
A look of joyous rapture
Light up the childish eyes.

"Oh, auntie! I'm so flattered
To have dear pussy feel,
That I can make a custard
That's good enough to steal."



The Edison!

The latest style Edison Phonograph in our new outfit No. 10—this superb entertainer, Mr. Edison's latest, final improvement of phonograph—shipped

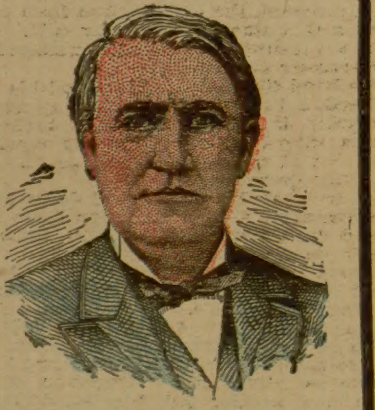
FREE

Yes, free. I don't ask a cent of your money—I don't want you to keep the phonograph—I just want to give it to you on a free loan—then you may return it at my own expense.

Read the Offer: I will ship you free this grand No. 10 outfit, Fireside Model, with one dozen Gold Moulded and Amberol records. You do not have to pay me a cent C. O. D. or sign any leases or mortgages. I want you to get this free outfit—the masterpiece of Mr. Edison's skill—in your home. I want you to see and hear Mr. Edison's final and greatest improvement in phonographs. I want to convince you of its wonderful superiority. Give a free concert; give a free minstrel show, music, dances, the old fashioned hymns, grand opera, comic opera—all this I want you to hear free of charge—all in your own home—on this free loan offer.

MY REASON—My reason for this free loan offer, this extra liberal offer on the finest talking machine ever made—see below.

MR. EDISON Says: "I Want to see a Phonograph in Every American Home."



The phonograph is the result of years of experiment; it is Mr. Edison's pet and hobby. He realizes fully its value as an entertainer and educator; for the phonograph brings the pleasure of the city right to the village and the farm home. Now, the new Fireside Edison Phonograph of our outfit No. 10. 1910 Model, is the latest and greatest improved talking machine made by this great inventor. Everybody should hear it; everybody must hear it. If you have only heard other talking machines before, you cannot imagine what beautiful music you can get from the outfit No. 10. This new machine is just out and has never been heard around the country. We want to convince you; we want to prove to you that this outfit is far, far superior to anything ever heard before. Don't miss this wonderfully liberal offer.

MY REASON I don't want you to buy it—I don't ask you to buy anything. But I do feel that if I can send you this great phonograph and convince you of its merits, of its absolute superiority, you will be glad to invite your neighbors and friends to your house to let them hear the free concert. Then, perhaps, one or more of your friends will be glad to buy one of these great outfits No. 10. You can tell your friends that they can get an Edison Phonograph outfit complete with records for only $2.00 a month—$2.00 a month—the easiest possible payment and, at the same time, a rock-bottom price. Perhaps you, yourself, would want a phonograph, and if you ever intend to get a phonograph, now is the chance to get the brand new and most wonderful phonograph ever made, and on a most wonderfully liberal offer. But if neither you nor your friends want the machine, that is O. K.; I simply want you to have it on a free loan, and perhaps somebody who heard the machine will buy one later. I am glad to send it on the free loan offer anyway. I will take it as a favor if you will send me your name and address so I can send you the catalog—then you can decide whether you want the free loan. There are no strings on this offer, absolutely none. It is a free loan, that is all. I ask not for one cent of your money, I only say if any of your people want to buy a phonograph, they may get one for $2 a month, if they want it.

Now, remember, nobody asks for a cent of your money. I want every responsible household in the country, every man who wants to see his home cheerful and his family entertained, every good father, every good husband, to write and get these free concerts for his home. Remember the loan is absolutely free from us, and we do not even charge you anything C. O. D.

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